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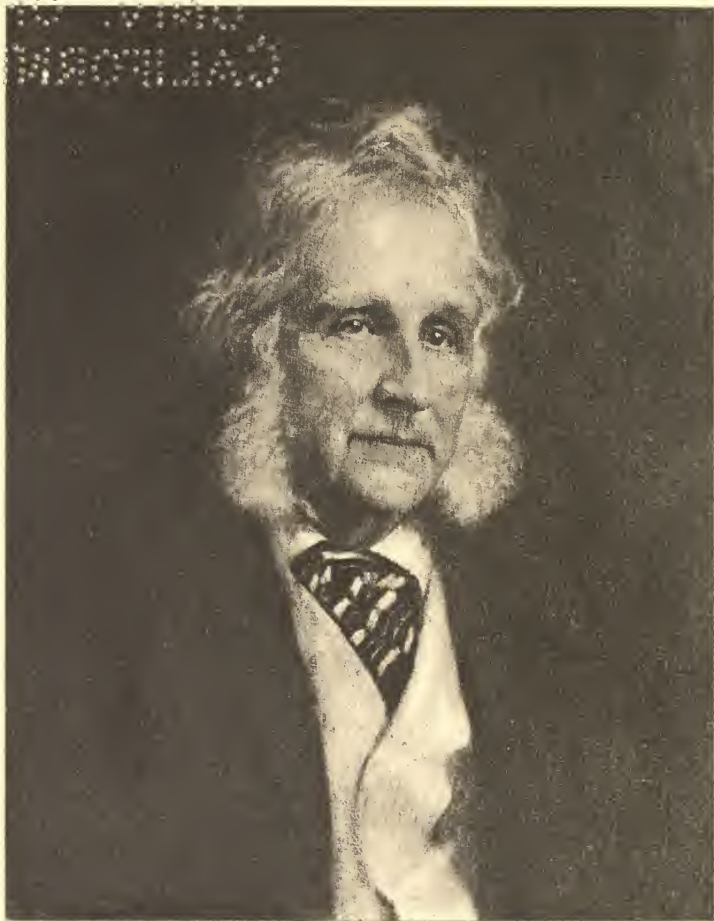




THE LIFE OF  
DONALD G. MITCHELL



# THE CITY OF CHICAGO



*Aged 82. Painted in 1904 by Katherine Allot Cox*

*Rowd. G. Mitchell*

THE LIFE OF  
DONALD G. MITCHELL  
IK MARVEL

BY  
WALDO H. DUNN

*What is fortune of any kind, whether in the shape of  
genius, or strength, or money, or opportunity, worth, ex-  
cept it be employed in the development of individuality?*  
—D. G. M. IN NOTE-BOOK.

NEW YORK  
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS

1922

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MAIN

TO  
MY GOOD FRIENDS  
THE SONS AND THE DAUGHTERS OF EDGEWOOD  
CHILDREN WORTHY OF THEIR PARENTAGE

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But historians cannot dispose of Providence; and even biographers are compelled to show a reasonable regard for facts.

—*Fudge Doings*, 2. 75.

## PREFACE

I finish this biography with a sense of deep satisfaction. Its completion marks the fulfilment of a hope long cherished. I was nearing the end of my second year in college when I conceived the notion of writing it, although my interest in the subject long antedates that period. A selection from *Dream Life* in McGuffey's *Fifth Eclectic Reader* introduced me to Mr. Mitchell's writings when I was a schoolboy not yet ten years of age. Even then I was charmed by the sweet flow of the delicate English, and the strong current of feeling beneath; and as I read the passage over and over, and then read the brief sketch of the author's life at the beginning of the selection; of how he was born in 1822—even then an "old man" as I thought, but not yet dead; for there was a dash ("—") after the birth-date—I wondered whether I should ever see the man who had written so delightfully, and whether I should ever own a copy of that book, *Dream Life*, or any of the others mentioned in the sketch. One after another, Mr. Mitchell's writings came into my possession, and I was not content until I had read and reread them all, from *Fresh Gleanings*, through the limpid pages of *English Lands, Letters, and Kings*, down to the last volume of *American Lands and Letters*. Still later I came to personal meeting with the author.

I owe a great debt of gratitude to Mr. Mitchell. His writings first interested me in English style. I have often said that he taught me more of English than I ever learned from my rhetorics. More than any other one influence his

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familiar talks on literature aroused my enthusiasm, at an early and impressionable age, for the work to which I am devoting my life. A desire to live in the vicinity of Edgewood led to my graduation from Yale. On the 21st of January 1903, Mr. Mitchell gave me a photograph of himself, upon which he placed a kindly autograph inscription. I said then that it should hang above my study-table as an inspiration throughout my undergraduate life. It still occupies its accustomed place. Month after month as I have wrought on this biography, the sweet and kindly face has looked down upon me. The closest study of the man's life has only increased my admiration of his character and my love of the ideals for which he contended.

I owe another debt of gratitude to his family for intrusting to me the preparation of this biography. Their entire confidence in me; the freedom with which they have placed every document at my disposal; their desire that I tell the story fully and freely in my own way—all these things have made the work a delight. Beyond all else, however, I prize the friendship which has grown out of our work together. Very much of my task was performed in Mr. Mitchell's well-loved library during a delightful period of residence at Edgewood. I shall retain as among the pleasantest memories of life, long evenings of talk in the library with Mr. Mitchell's daughters, and rambles over the Woodbridge hills with his sons. Nor shall I forget an August journey into the quietudes of Salem with the sons Donald G. and Walter L. Mitchell, or memorable conversations and readings with Mrs. Susan Mitchell Hoppin, at her ever-beautiful "Farm of Edgewood." To thank those who have been always helpful would be to name the entire Mitchell family. I feel constrained, however, to make special public

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acknowledgment of the assistance I have received from Miss Harriet Williams Mitchell. The care with which she has preserved and arranged the materials relating to her father's life has greatly lightened my task. The completeness of this narrative is due in no small measure to her filial devotion and her untiring industry.

I desire also to thank Mr. Mitchell's friends, and my own, for aid and encouragement. To name them all would be to extend this preface beyond its due limits. I cannot, however, forbear making special acknowledgment to several. I owe thanks to Prof. Henry A. Beers, of Yale University, who could have written this biography so much better than I, for reading a portion of it in manuscript, and supplying needed facts. As usual, my good friend and colleague, Mr. Walter E. Peck, of the department of English in The College of Wooster, has given unsparingly of his time to read my manuscript, and to him I am indebted for many valuable suggestions. Another friend and colleague, Mr. Frederick W. Moore, has kindly read all the proofs. To my cousin, Miss Letha M. Jones, I am deeply indebted for painstaking work in the New York Public Library upon the gathering and verification of bibliographical data. I am further indebted to Herbert F. Gunnison, Esq., and to Mr. Irving Bacheller, for permission to quote from Mr. Mitchell's "At Yale Sixty Years Ago"; to the publishers of *The Youth's Companion* for permission to use the article "Looking Back at Boyhood"; to Mr. Jacob B. Perkins, of Cleveland, Ohio, a son of Mr. Mitchell's roommate at Yale, and to Mrs. Maud M. Merrill, of Stamford, Connecticut, for interesting letters of Mr. Mitchell; to Sir Robert Stout, chief justice of New Zealand, for valuable information; to Mr. Henry Charles Taylor, for an expression of opinion; to Alfred

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K. Merritt, Esq., registrar of Yale College, and to Mr. Andrew Keogh, M.A., Librarian of Yale University, for their kindness in supplying information; to Mr. Charles Scribner, for the use of letters from the files of Messrs. Charles Scribner's Sons; to Mr. Charles J. Dunn, Jr., of South Portland, Maine, for the loan of valuable books; and to Messrs. John Ashhurst, William F. Clarke, Alvin H. Sanders, John W. Plaisted, and Walter S. Green, for bibliographical data. I have my daughters Dorothy and Lorna to thank for assistance in reading proofs and making the index. To none do I owe more than to my wife, whose unselfish co-operation made this work possible.

In quoting from Mr. Mitchell's books I have throughout this biography referred to the Edgewood edition, published by Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1907. *The Battle Summer*, *The Lorgnette*, and *Fudge Doings* are not included in that edition. All references to these three are to the original editions in book form—those of 1850, 1850, and 1855, respectively.

I cannot close without brief reference to the publishers. In these days of swift changes in the business world it seems to me significant that the present officers of the company which issues this biography—Mr. Charles Scribner, president; Mr. Arthur Scribner, treasurer; and Mr. Charles Scribner, Jr., secretary—are respectively sons and grandson of the man who more than seventy years ago began publishing Mr. Mitchell's works. I am grateful for the care which they have bestowed upon the production of this volume.

WALDO H. DUNN.

WOOSTER, OHIO, April 12th, 1922.

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# THE LIFE OF DONALD G. MITCHELL

## IK MARVEL

### I

#### THE MAN

Simply to recall him, however, is—I think—to honor him; for there is no memory of him however shadowy or vagrant which is not grateful to you, to me, and to all the reading world.—(Washington Irving Centennial Address), *Bound Together*, 3.

It is my good fortune to portray the life of a man who touched the world at many points, and always to finer issues. For well-nigh three-quarters of a century the names Donald G. Mitchell and Ik Marvel have been household words not only throughout the English-speaking world but throughout many countries of alien tongue. Familiar as people have been with the names, affectionately as millions have regarded the man, and closely as they have been drawn to his spirit, few have known anything of the intimate details of his life. For Mr. Mitchell's was a most retiring and sensitive nature. He discouraged all attempts to exploit his personality or his work. He shrank from the thought of becoming the subject of biography, wishing, as he once said, that a writer might betake himself to "a larger and better subject." I am quite sure, however, that those who love him, those who have lingered and who still linger over the pages of his charming books, those who have been

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taught by him to feel the beauties of nature with his own poignant thrill, will welcome this narrative. I shall attempt to reveal something of his courageous life; something of the secret of his power; something of the means by which he influenced his fellow men, achieved fame for himself, and earned the lasting gratitude of millions of readers.

The life of no other American quite parallels that of Mr. Mitchell. His interests were many. He was author, editor, practical farmer, landscape-gardener, art critic; and in all these activities he attained distinction. He is known chiefly perhaps as a man of letters; yet he always hesitated to call himself a professional author, and stoutly maintained that his contribution to the practical and æsthetic phases of rural life was his finest achievement. It was characteristic of him to consider his practical work at Edgewood as of more value than any of his writings. I am reminded, however, that so competent an authority as Mr. Henry Charles Taylor, of the United States Department of Agriculture, pronounces *Wet Days at Edgewood* to be, so far as he knows, the best book on the history of agricultural literature that has been written. I hope that I have been reasonably successful in setting forth Mr. Mitchell's contributions to the amenities of rural and of home life.

I do not hesitate to affirm that I myself am primarily attracted by the strong, sweet character of Mr. Mitchell. He was greatest as a man. He lived a life of singular simplicity and purity, a life free from ostentation and affectation, a life dedicated to the highest ideals. He sought the realities of life, and never strained after the possession of its shams and vain shows. He had great courage and an invincible spirit. Although never physically strong, he wrought more than the work of a strong man. Never obtrusive, al-

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ways modest, free from the false standards which have always blighted life, he was a type of the best that is possible in the way of living. Without seeking a following, he gained one, and has left a deep and abiding impression upon the world. He lives in the hearts of the people whose lives he touched to nobler living; in the beauty which his words and deeds have incited others to create.

Mr. Mitchell lived a long life in a period of great intellectual ferment. He saw almost the whole of the development of the greatest period of American literature. It is worth while, I think, to remember his chronology. He was contemporary, friend, and successor of Washington Irving. He was a member of the committee appointed to provide a permanent memorial to James Fenimore Cooper, and helped to arrange a public meeting in the old Metropolitan Hall, New York, over which Daniel Webster presided, and before which William Cullen Bryant delivered a eulogy on Cooper. Before Oliver Wendell Holmes had won fame as the Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table, Mr. Mitchell had attained even international prominence. When he published his first book in 1847, Longfellow's *Hiawatha* was as yet unthought of, and Lowell's *Biglow Papers* were running in the columns of the *Boston Courier*. When *Reveries of a Bachelor* was published in 1850, Nathaniel Hawthorne had just completed his term of office in the Salem Custom House, and had ready for publication *The Scarlet Letter*. During the decade from 1837 to 1847 Emerson had published two volumes of essays and one of poems, and was about to issue *Representative Men*. Poe had risen to prominence and was nearing the end of his unhappy life. Mr. Mitchell, with a considerable bibliography to his credit, became consul at Venice when his successor-to-be, William Dean Howells, was but sixteen years old.

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Moreover, Mr. Mitchell lived to record in literature most of the men who had achieved eminence in American letters, and who died before 1900.

As I have said, Mr. Mitchell's name and fame have gone far. His authorized publishers have sold well over a million copies of his books. There can be little doubt that the sales of the more than fifty unauthorized editions have far exceeded that.

The mention of Mr. Mitchell's name—or, rather, the mention of his pen-name, Ik Marvel—recalls to most people the two little volumes which first brought him into prominence—*Reveries of a Bachelor* and *Dream Life*. These books are, indeed, distinctively his own; another could hardly have written them. They represent, however, only a small portion of his literary work, and that not the portion of which he thought most. In fact, those who think of Mr. Mitchell as a writer only, or chiefly as a literary man, make a grave error. He thought of himself first and foremost as a farmer and landscape-gardener, and valued most his agricultural and rural writings.

In writing Mr. Mitchell's life, I have not found it necessary to supply a background of political narrative, to record the stirring details of national history during his lifetime, or to explain literary movements. For in a certain great sense he was detached; he was apart from all such things. Whether moving in Washington among the lawmakers in the days of the Mexican War, or in Paris during the revolution of 1848, he himself is for us always the centre of interest. At all times and in all places he was individual; his biography, therefore, is the story of himself. Under any form of government, or in almost any period of modern history, he would have been himself. He never, after the Venice consulate,

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occupied official position; he was never in this sense of the term a public man. From his detached position he saw with sanity and clearness many things which the public is just beginning to see. And it is because he was charmingly—even stubbornly—himself that people loved him. The world must always reverence and love the man who, living a life of purity devoted to the pursuit of high ideals, never allows himself to be moved from his principles. Mr. Mitchell had his own notions upon all subjects. His religion was his own; his methods of work—whether writing or farming—were his own; his ways of rearing children were original with him. His books are a reflection of his mind and spirit.

Wherever he happened to be, in cities at home or abroad, or tossing on the ocean, always the voices of the country were calling him; he was ever dreaming of a cozy home surrounded by trees and flowers, and made beautiful by the simplicities of life. Edgewood was an embodiment of his ideal of beauty in process of accomplishment. Beautiful as it was and is, it only approximates his ideal.

His political course was deliberately chosen. He had studied problems of government from his youth; in college he gave close attention to political theories. He had observed the practice of politics in Washington at close range, and knew at first hand what it required. His impressions are well given in his Ik Marvel letters from the capital. He was too keen not to see through the shams and the hypocrisy; too honest to countenance or to practise them. He knew that “the shouting and the tumult” was not the true heart of the nation; that it was temporary; that even while it seemingly occupied the seat of authority, the opinions and the lives of the obscure aristocracy were working their way to the fore. He was content, therefore, that the clamorous

## THE LIFE OF DONALD G. MITCHELL

and noisy mob should possess the present; he believed the silent and the better influences were moulding the nation to fairer form. "Let us remember," he once wrote in his notebook, "that all influence does not lie in a vote, nor is it measured by the grossness of party connection, or of party zeal. There is a grander influence in a man's life than in his special turn of a ballot to-day or to-morrow. That influence springs from the tenor of his life. Does he respect honesty and honor? Is his course straightforward, high-minded, charitable, industrious? Tell me this of him, assure me of this, and I tell you he is a man who is strengthening the bases and the hopes of our American Republic. . . . I tell you that the color of a vote as compared with the color of a man's daily life, is like the color of a blooming spindle of corn in comparison with the golden ripeness of the corn in the ear." Hence, he was content to let others rule ostensibly; he preferred to rule by example and silent influence. He believed that "the post of honor is the private station."

Attempts were now and then made to lure Mr. Mitchell into public life. The story goes that in 1876 he was offered the nomination for the governorship of Connecticut. What purported to be his letter of declination went the rounds of the press at the time. I have been unable to discover the original of the document which I am about to quote, but I am convinced that Mr. Mitchell wrote it. "You tell me this movement is strong and popular," he began. "Suppose I should be elected and compelled to take up my abode in brick-and-mortar-environed Hartford, while all the coppices of Edgewood are bright with summer bloom. I would rather be farmer than governor; I would rather sit in my library of an afternoon and watch the growing corn undulating in the western wind, than sit in the chair of state signing bills for



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public acts; and the bright flag floating above the capitol would not be so pleasing in my eyes as the smoky banner of the far-off steamer seen athwart the dancing waters silvered in the June sunshine." Some time in April 1876, Mr. Philip H. Austen, of Baltimore, Maryland, one of Mr. Mitchell's college-mates, clipped the foregoing letter from a daily paper and sent it to Edgewood with the following verses:

Writing the *Reveries of a Bachelor*  
Proved Ik a Marvel with his quill;  
Waiving the revenues of a governor  
Proves Ik a greater Marvel still.

One source of Mr. Mitchell's power lay in his rare combination of Puritan and Cavalier qualities. In this respect, I have always associated him with John Milton. At bottom, Mr. Mitchell was a Puritan; his whole character was built upon the foundation of Puritan morality. Although he grew away from the stern Puritan conception of God, he retained to the end a profound reverence for the Deity, and kept silence before Him. At the same time he was a worshipper of beauty. Ugliness, angularity, slovenliness, hurt him; and in his fight against them he never allowed his "sword to sleep within his hand." It was his love of beauty, his sense of taste, his feeling for the fitness of things that made it impossible for him to reconcile himself to the architectural régime of Yale as he knew it.

His appreciation of English landscape and English methods of beautifying home-grounds was his by right of inheritance. He was an interpreter to America of the best in British life. He belongs to the number of those choice spirits—Washington Irving, Nathaniel Hawthorne, George W. Curtis, and William Winter—who have loved America

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without scorning Britain, who have kept the fires burning on the altars of friendship and affection. With them he knew Great Britain; knew her beauties, her foibles, her strengths, and her weaknesses; knew her, loved her, and wrote of her sympathetically. His words have done much to awaken a love of the mother country in many an American heart.

In this biography I have, so far as possible, tried to bring the reader into immediate contact with the subject. I have felt that where Mr. Mitchell has spoken, it would be unwise for any one else to speak; and I am convinced that his friends and readers would not wish to hear other words than his own. I am the more convinced of this because of the power of his written word to attract people. "Somehow, you have never seemed to me a stranger," is an oft-recurring statement in letters written to Mr. Mitchell. An interesting story emphasizes this quality. Mr. Julius Chambers has told how many years ago he spent a month in Granada, near the Alhambra Hill. One evening he found atop the watch-tower of the castle a young Spaniard deeply absorbed in the reading of a book which proved to be an edition of *Reveries of a Bachelor* done into Spanish by "A Student of Salamanca." In the course of their conversation the young man told Mr. Chambers that he would gladly give a year of his life to know the author of the little book.

Few of Mr. Mitchell's readers knew and appreciated him better than did his friend William Winter, one of whose paragraphs I cannot resist quoting. "Everybody who has gained experience has observed that most persons—authors included—are disturbers of peace. The human being who tranquilizes his fellow-creatures is rare. Mitchell, from the first, allured his readers with gentleness, and made them

## THE MAN

calm. Washington Irving spoke of having been drawn toward Mitchell by the qualities of head and heart in his writings, but he did not name them. Perhaps he would have mentioned, first of all, that quality of grace which diffuses peace—that blending of dignity and sweetness which is at once the sign and the allurements of natural distinction. Mitchell is a writer who never stands in front of his subject, and who never asks attention to himself. Washington Irving had the same characteristic, and it was natural that they should be drawn together.”

Mr. Winter has spoken truly. “It is of little moment,” said Emerson, “that one or two or twenty errors of our social system be corrected, but of much that the man be in his senses.” It was Mr. Mitchell’s high calling to tranquillize his fellow creatures; to teach them sanity and serenity; to help them attain unto living peace.

His words live in the hearts of men. His touch of quietness and order and beauty lies upon all the city of New Haven, and the country thereabout. The whole of New England has been quickened to a sure issue of beauty by his subtle, unescapable influence. It is not possible to estimate the far reach of his Edgewood books; one comes upon them in the most obscure places. It is not, however, too much to say that through them his rare taste is permeating all the United States, and is year by year guiding it to a surer sense and love of the beautiful. To write the biography of such a man is to grow toward nobler endeavor; to read it is to learn the sweetness and the simplicity that make life truly great.



## THE FORMATIVE YEARS



## II

### ANCESTRY AND EARLY YOUTH

The pride which induces a man to cherish the memory of an honored and respected ancestor is not an ignoble pride—nor is it an unusual one; and he must be a sot indeed who is insensible to the regard which by common acclaim should attach to the name of his sire.—*The Lorgnette*, 1.255.

And thus it is that home, boy-home, passes away forever—like the swaying of a pendulum—like the fading of a shadow on the floor.—*Dream Life*, 107.

Donald Grant Mitchell came into life dowered with a rich heritage of blood, culture, and family tradition. His ancestry through six generations was of British origin. In the paternal line it begins authentically with Sir James Ware, member of the Irish Parliament in 1613, and auditor-general of Ireland, whose son James is remembered for his *De Scriptoribus Hiberniæ* (1639), a biographical dictionary of Irish authors. In the maternal line occur many famous names—Gardiners, Woodbridges, Parkers, Saltonstalls, and Brewsters; and the early history of New England bears witness to the impress left by these families upon the material and spiritual development of the country. The pedigree of his maternal grandfather, Nathaniel Shaw Woodbridge (1771–1797), goes back to the Rev. John Woodbridge (d. 1637), rector of Highworth, Wiltshire, England, who married Sara, daughter of the Rev. Robert Parker, “one of the

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greatest scholars in the English nation." The line of his maternal grandmother, Elizabeth Mumford (1771-1795), has been traced to Sir Richard Saltonstall (b. 1586), who in 1644 was English ambassador to Holland, where Rembrandt painted his portrait; and includes William Brewster (b. 1560), of the *Mayflower*, "ruling elder and spiritual guide of the Pilgrim Fathers." Soldiers, sea-captains, statesmen, authors, and divines appear and reappear in the long history of both ancestral lines. They were mostly English and Scotch, with now and then an admixture of Irish and Welsh. They have been, on the whole, capable, industrious, fearless, upright, and, above all, honest. For well-nigh three hundred years they have upheld the best traditions of the British race, and have blended sturdy strength and unyielding spirit with bright fancy and quick wit.

Mr. Mitchell was always reasonably proud of his ancestry. For him, the achievements of his forefathers were incentives to high living and individual effort. His keen humor and clear common sense lifted him far above any dependence upon mere pride of birth; he was never stultified by ancestral greatness; he never allowed the weight of pedigree to become oppressive. Some of his sharpest satirical thrusts were directed toward those whose only claim to attention rested upon the deeds of illustrious forebears; and he never ceased to enjoy Sir Thomas Overbury's reference to the "potato-fields" of ancestry. "Individuality," he wrote, "seems to me the best stamp and seal that a man can carry: if he cannot carry that, it will take a great deal to carry him. If a man's own heart and energy are not equal to the making of his fortune, he will find, I think, a very poor resort in what Sir Tommy Overbury calls 'the potato fields of his ancestors;' meaning, by that cheerful figure, that



## ANCESTRY AND EARLY YOUTH

all there is good about the matter is below ground.”<sup>1</sup> Through Sir Richard Saltonstall, Mr. Mitchell could trace connection with Edward III of England; but he was very careful not to let the fact be known. In 1895 he prepared a chart for his daughter Mary upon which this Edward connection was shown. Within a few days he was regretting his action. “I don’t know,” he began (January 6th, 1896), “if you have received a letter I wrote to you some ten days ago; but write again to say that I shall be very much mortified and ‘put out’ if you give any ‘forward’ place to the ‘pedigree’ which I sent. Put *this* out of sight, and some time I will make a nicer one going back only to colonial times, which can be boasted of without vulgar braggadocio! It was only to amuse you for the Christmas season that I prepared it. I have laughed, ever since I could laugh sardonically at anything, at the vulgar pretention of those who make a boast, or a show of such ‘tagging’ at royalty, or its shadows, and should be dreadfully mortified at your calling any special attention to that ‘gim-crack’ of a pedigree.” The noble pride which he cherished for those whose blood flowed in his veins became for him a source of strength manifesting itself quietly and without ostentation in a worthiness of life and work that added lustre to the long ancestral story. How well he knew that story may be learned from an examination of the *Woodbridge Record*, his lasting memorial to family history and achievement.

In 1885 he wrote a brief account of his family in which he gave such information as he considered of immediate importance. From it I make a few extracts:

I am able to tell . . . very little of James Mitchell . . . save that he came from Scotland—neighborhood of Paisley—about the

<sup>1</sup> *Fudge Doings*, 1.32.

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year 1730, and settled in Wethersfield. He married, shortly after, a daughter of the well-known family of Buck, in that town. . . .

By a second marriage with Rebecca Mix, daughter of Rev. Stephen Mix, of Wethersfield, the emigrant James became the father of Stephen Mix Mitchell, my grandfather. What the avocations of James Mitchell may have been, or what means, if any, he brought with him from the old country, I never knew. I remember only that an ancient house of the colonial type stood upon the southwestern angle of my grandfather's home lots, on Wethersfield Street, and was called the homestead of "Grandfather James." I have further heard that he was sometime engaged in the West India trade; the fact that a grandson died at sea, and another in the West Indies, seems to favor the tradition about his over-sea trade; but I know nothing of it definitely.

. . . Stephen Mix, only child by his second marriage, married in due time Hannah Grant, daughter of a well established landholder and merchant of Newtown, Conn., Donald Grant, who had come from Scotland—neighborhood of Inverness—about 1735. The passport of this Donald Grant, with its commendation of the bearer by the authorities of the parish of Duthel, Inverness-shire, is still in my possession; and so is the old-style, flint-lock fowling-piece which he brought with him on his migration. Shortly after the marriage of Stephen Mix (1769), his father, James Mitchell, then for a second time a widower, married for his third wife, Mrs. Arminal (Toucey) Grant, the mother of his son Stephen's bride. A speech thereanent, credited to the veteran bridegroom James, used to be current in the family: "My boy has ta'en the chick, so I'll e'en gather in the old hen."

My grandfather, Stephen Mix Mitchell, was educated at Yale, class of 1763, was tutor there in 1766, and received the degree of LL.D. in 1807. He was in the same year, I think, appointed Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the State of Connecticut. He had previously been Judge, for many years, of the county court; he was also a delegate to the Old Congress, where he was

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much associated with his colleague, Hon. William Samuel Johnson, of Stratford, an association which led to much intimacy between the families of the two delegates. Subsequently (1793) he was appointed United States Senator from Connecticut. He did good service for his state in establishing her title to the "Western Reserve" lands in Ohio; and from all accounts which have come to my knowledge, did other service to his generation by living uprightly, and dealing fairly with all men. My grandfather was a tutor at Yale long before the day of his *ex officio* fellowship; and I have heard the story told in our family circle, fifty years ago, that when Timothy Dwight, the first, presented himself for admission to college, Tutor Mitchell took the future president upon his knee—so small and young was he—in prosecuting the examination.

I have quite a vivid recollection of the personality of the old gentleman (he died in 1835)—a figure bent with the weight of over ninety years, abounding white hair, a face clean-shaven, an aquiline nose, and an eye that seemed to see everything. The portrait by Professor S. F. B. Morse [painted in 1827] . . . is wonderfully like the venerable man whom I remember, and at whose house in Wethersfield I used to make my semi-annual visits in journeying to and from the old school at Ellington. I remember distinctly his long woollen hose and his knee-buckles, and his oaken staff—on which he leaned heavily such times as he trudged away to his barns for a look at his cattle, or the fondling of some pet beast. His long coat—such as you see in pictures of Franklin—had huge lapels and pockets; these latter often bulging out with ears of corn, on the visitations I speak of, for the pampering of some favorite horse or pig.

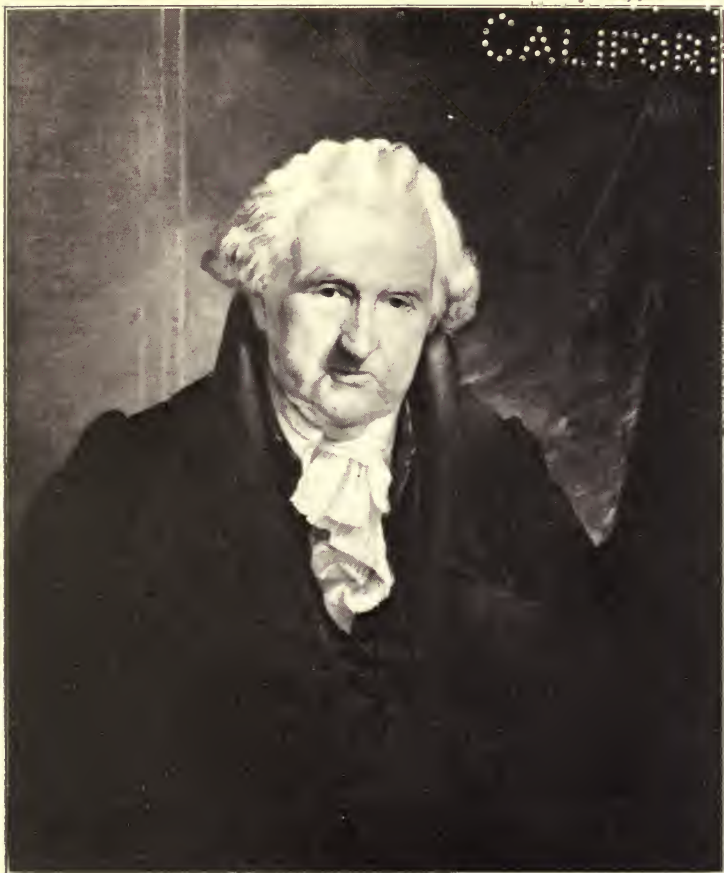
He had never but one home, that upon the angle of two of the Wethersfield streets (it is the first angle one encounters in going northerly from the brick "meeting house"); he clung to that home with Scotch tenacity, and brought up there a family of eleven children, who all reached mature years. Now, there is not a ves-

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tige left of the house in which he lived; nor any trace of the gardens with their "ox-heart" cherry trees, which flanked it north and south. I don't think there's a tree left thereabout which was standing in his time; but, on a late visit, I was fortunate enough to encounter an oldish native who remembered distinctly my grandfather, as I have described him, and his gambrel-roofed house, which was a capital type of a New England homestead. He recalled, too, much to my delectation, the low "chariot" which the rheumatic old gentleman had specially constructed (it was before the day of Park phaetons), and in which, with his venerable horse "Whitey" tackled thereto, he trundled through the village streets and along the "Har'ford meadows." He died at the goodly age of ninety-two, and lies buried near the summit of the hillock in the Wethersfield churchyard.

The eldest son of Judge Mitchell was Donald Grant (b. 1773), whose commission as Captain in the U. S. Army, signed by George Washington, is now hanging upon my library wall; a miniature portrait of him in his regimentals, which is also in my possession, shows a handsome blue-eyed young man of twenty-three; indeed, my aunts always spoke of him (with sisterly unction) as having been conspicuously handsome. He was much a favorite, too; and the story ran, in the Wethersfield house, that on a time a certain distinguished British visitor whose acquaintance the Judge had made in Philadelphia, was so impressed by the young Donald that he proposed taking him with him to London, engaging in that case to purchase for him a captaincy in the British army. To this, however, the patriot Judge would not accede, preferring for his boy the humble pay and perquisites belonging to the same grade in his country's service. Donald, however, did not long enjoy his captaincy; he died of yellow fever in Baltimore, in August of 1799. He was a graduate of Yale, 1792; as indeed were all the six sons of Chief Justice Mitchell.

Alfred (b. 1790) my father was the youngest son of Justice Mitchell, and the only clergyman in his family. He graduated at



STEPHEN MIX MITCHELL.

First Chief Justice of Connecticut. Grandfather of Donald G. Mitchell.

*From a portrait by S. F. B. Morse, painted in 1827.*



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Yale, 1809; studied thereafter at Andover, and at Washington, Conn., and in 1814 was ordained a minister to the parish of Chelsea in the town of Norwich. At about the same date he married Lucretia Woodbridge of Elmgrove, Lyme (now Salem), whom he had first encountered on his ministrations in the surrounding towns. Miss Woodbridge was one of two orphan daughters of Nathaniel Shaw Woodbridge, whose father was Rev. Ephraim Woodbridge of New London, and thus came in direct line of descent from Rev. John Woodbridge of Wethersfield, who married a daughter of Gov. Leete, and the earlier Rev. John Woodbridge of Andover, whose wife was daughter of Gov. Dudley. On the maternal side Miss Woodbridge was descended from the Christophers, the Gardiners of Gardiner's Island, and the Saltonstalls of New London.

In his first and only parish of Chelsea, now Second Church of Norwich, Rev. Alfred Mitchell served some seventeen years, when he died aged forty-one. Those who knew him say that he greatly loved and exalted his office of preacher; and that while retiring and shy in his ordinary intercourse with men, boldness came to him when he entered his pulpit; and that he taught as one who believed thoroughly all that he taught. His home, unchanged throughout his life, was upon "the Plain," just northward of the present Slater Memorial Hall; and its territory embraced a small tract of wood, of garden, and of orchards. It is said that he loved these overmuch, and of all society enjoyed most that which he found at his own fireside. I remember very little of the personal appearance of my father . . . all the less, since during the last year of his lifetime I was mostly away from home, at school. Only dimly do I recall his tall figure leaning over the pulpit-cushion, and the wonderful earnestness of his manner.

Alfred Mitchell was ordained to the ministry of the Second Congregational Church of Norwich, Connecticut, October 27th, 1814. On the 16th of January 1815, he married Miss Lucretia Woodbridge, and established a home in the



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“parsonage house” at Norwich. This large square dwelling, built about 1785, faced the old Parade, or Great Plain, where now is Williams Park. It was a beautiful home, set in the midst of ample grounds, flanked by orchards, and girt about by woodland heights in the rear.

The surroundings of the parsonage home made a powerful appeal to Alfred Mitchell, and deepened his already strong love of nature. We are told that the woodland heights became his “walk, study, and oratory.” A part of his staid and exacting congregation was inclined to think him a bit eccentric, when he built in a remote corner of those wooded hills a little summer-house whither he withdrew to study and meditate. For recreation and quiet joy he turned to garden and orchard; and his fondness for flowers and fruits was transmitted to his children, especially to Donald. United with this deep sense of the beautiful, and love of its manifestation in nature, was a stern, unyielding Puritanism. His notion of religion and of its responsibilities exercised a somewhat tyrannous and repressive influence upon him; the Puritan within him came to predominate, and made him appear more serious and reserved than he was by nature. There is no doubt that many of the characteristics which Donald ascribes to Dr. Johns were the outcome of youthful memories of his father.

The contemporaries of Alfred Mitchell were impressed by his personal appearance and his “most amiable and interesting manners.” His portrait reveals an attractive face, and the large, thoughtful eyes of a dreamer. “His countenance,” wrote Albert T. Chester, “was benignant, though exceedingly grave and solemn; his gait and attitudes were all dignified. In speech he was deliberate; every thought was well examined before it was permitted to pass his lips. This gave



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him an appearance of reserve and coldness which, however, his uniform kindness and amiable temper ever contradicted. His sermons . . . delivered . . . with increased animation, fairly startled the congregation." In his *Annals of the American Pulpit*, Dr. William Buell Sprague records that Mr. Mitchell was "a good scholar, and was particularly distinguished for a judicious, fearless independence, united with great conscientiousness, though he was diffident in his manners to a fault." He was unusually sensitive to the responsibilities of his calling, and labored with increasing zeal, growing all the while perhaps more reserved in manner and more exacting in his own religious life. There is a probability that his death at the early age of forty-one was the result of over-exertion in conducting revival services—an overtaking of physical and spiritual energies.

Lucretia Woodbridge brought sterling qualities of head and heart to the Norwich manse. She had never known the love of either parent. Her father, during the seven years of his married life, occupied a country estate near Elmgrove, Salem, which he had inherited from his mother's people, the Shaws. Here he lived as "a country squire, devoted to horses, dogs, hunting, and out-of-door sports, and probably had little to do with the practical side of a farmer's life. He was of an affectionate nature, and devotedly attached to his friends. . . . He was convivial in his tastes, generous to a fault, a careless liver; and finally, the delicacy of his constitution, which he had inherited from his father and mother, developed into consumption, which ended his life at the early age of twenty-six."<sup>1</sup> Upon the death of her father, two years after that of her mother, Lucretia, not yet two years old, was taken by her grandparents, John and Lucretia

<sup>1</sup> *Chronicles of a Connecticut Farm, 1769-1905.* Compiled by Mary E. Perkins.

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Christophers Mumford, who lived near by at Elmgrove, her paternal grandparents being already dead.

A portrait of Lucretia Woodbridge painted by Samuel Waldo about 1815 passed to the son Donald, and for more than fifty years has hung above the mantelpiece in the Edgewood library. It is the portrait of a beautiful young woman. The delicately moulded chin, the sensitive mouth, the eyebrows distinctly outlined, the soft, luminous, trustful eyes, all speak of unusual refinement of character. She had been reared in the Episcopalian faith. Of course, when she became the wife of Alfred Mitchell, she entered a chillier, sterner religious atmosphere. Religious by nature, she bent herself very conscientiously to conformity with the new conditions, and doubtless held herself to many an undeserved reckoning. All the sternness and discipline of a Puritan minister's home could not, however, sour or overlay the sweet naturalness of her religion, and Donald testifies to the influence of his mother as worth more in the life of her children than all the sermons and catechisings.

Husband and wife were congenial, and their short wedded life was, in spite of burdens of ill health and death, more than ordinarily happy. A portion of a letter written in 1816 or 1817 (postmarked May 1st) to her husband from her old home, where she was visiting, is illuminating, and helps us to realize somewhat of the conditions out of which it came. It is eloquent of the conflict between her love and her acquired Puritan tenets. It is, indeed, just such a letter as sweet little Rachel Johns might have written to her goodman, the Rev. Dr. Benjamin Johns:

How true it is [she writes] that in the midst of happiness the sighing heart will remind us of imperfection. I find even at Elm-

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grove, surrounded by near and dear friends, I have many thoughts hovering around our snug little parlour and its poor, solitary inmate, and wish often that he could make one of our happy circle. But it is best that we should be sometimes separated. I find by it that I am making too much an arm of flesh my confidence, and forgetting that gracious Being, the author of every mercy, on whom alone all my trust should be stayed. I hope you do not fail to commend us to his protecting care, and implore his grace to strengthen and assist me in every duty. Thus far I have experienced his loving kindness and tender mercy. . . .

Of such parents and amid such surroundings, Donald Grant, fourth child and second son, was born on the 12<sup>th</sup> of April 1822. The pages of his books reveal how open and sensitive was his youthful mind to impressions of home surroundings. *Reveries of a Bachelor*, *Dream Life*, *About Old Story Tellers*, *Dr. Johns*, and *Bound Together* have woven into their very texture the story of his young days; fact, and memory, and fiction blend into a web that only the author himself could ever satisfactorily unravel. Few men have written so wholly out of their own experience. And yet, according to his own testimony, his recollections did not extend to an unusually early age:

I wonder [he wrote in an autobiographical fragment of 1894] at those autobiographies which carry back recollections to the age of three, four, and five. The farthest-back memory which I can fix by years is when my father, or one of the children, alluded to my birthday of five years (1827). I know I was seated on the nurse's knee, and she was putting on my shoes when I looked up to the interlocutor. I remember, too, a severe punishment from my father at the same age—perhaps six months earlier—when for some sharp assault upon the same good old nurse (either biting or kicking), my father snatched me from her lap—as I was, half-

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dressed—took me out of doors, and dipped me into the tub by the well where the horses drank, to cool me off. This is distinct to me now at *æ.* 72. From this, and other recollections, I am sure my father must have been a very severe disciplinarian; too severe to kindle a child's best love. I know my feeling toward him was very different from that toward my mother. We—all of us, I think—went to her first.

Notwithstanding Mr. Mitchell's statement about the period of his first recollections, there is no doubt whatever of the sharpness and tenacity of his memory. Nor is there any doubt that the spell of the past fell upon him very early. The Tennysonian "passion of the past" was his seemingly by right of birth. One has only to look at the drawing of Norwich, entitled "A Boyhood Memory," which he made in 1895, to gain some little conception of the quality of his memory, and of the kind of thing which imprinted itself upon his boy mind. It is interesting to observe that the course of his life fostered this peculiar quality of mind and memory. The brevity of his early home life, the shadows that came with each death, the final break-up of his home in boyhood, the long period of exile in Europe, all had their powerful influence in moulding a nature already sensitive by inheritance to an unusual degree of sensitiveness and sadness. Throughout his life he loved to turn to "the days that are no more," and in the very temple of Delight he found with Keats the sovran shrine of Melancholy, and dared to burst Joy's grape with strenuous tongue against his palate fine. Inherited tendencies and the circumstances of his early life steadily moulded him for the kind of writing in which he was to excel.

The strongest of his early impressions were religious, and those unpleasant and such as colored all the rest of his life.

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Always a devoutly religious man—with a strong tincture of Puritanism—he yet never failed to deprecate the old methods as he knew and remembered them. The fifth chapter of *Dream Life* is wrought out of his own early religious experiences. In the light of his youth it seems inevitable that he should have written such a book as *Dr. Johns*. From almost illegible pencil notes made by Mr. Mitchell when he was between seventy and eighty-five, the following narrative in his own words is arranged. He believed in jotting down such reminiscences, and, furthermore, recognized the value of them when put into print. “Reminiscence,” he wrote, “is not egotism; what is valued in it is the side-light thrown upon the history of the times; the deliberate, interspaced coloring which supplies what larger and more serious history-making smiles at as irrelevant and unimportant.”

But [he asks] are these little touches unimportant? The shoes in a row by the side of the fire-place: that, in mid-winter, the warm place; the old cook a little squally and impatient with us clustering there; but we bore the scorchings, the cuffs, the little, good-natured buffets, for love of the griddle-cakes coming to a delicious brown upon the great, round griddle-iron suspended on the end of a great crane; and swinging it out as occasion demanded for a little dab of her butter-swab, or a good wipe with some reserved cloth; or for ladling upon it with ever so much of dexterity a little, slowly-spreading island of creamy, delectable, floury mixture, from which the brown, dappled, unctuous buckwheat cakes with white edges and chocolate expanse of middle parts were presently evolved. No range—no stove—only that great wood-fire with huge, lumbering log, a great lift for Ebenezer, the stout negro in charge of wood-stores.

Family prayers on buckwheat cake days were always too long; or when a crisp morning tempted us to sliding down hill—coasting

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was a word not known in that day. Then school was opened with another chapter reading and another prayer; this was an awful banality; family feeling softened the other, my hand touching the mother's gown; made it bearable, proper, nay beautiful, when the sliding was not over good, or other things tempted, such as scent of buckwheat cakes on the round griddle, which always diffused through the house a festive odor of its own.

Then the "asking a blessing"—always sure, but under home utterance not very long, and serving as warning to eat, and not more noticed than the ticking of the clock, or the little whirl of some alarm gear in its body before the striking of every hour (I think this simile came to me early). But when a strange clergyman came from the up-country, the wild places of Griswold or Voluntown, who thought it wise to interlard the "blessing asking" with a little didactic discourse, it fretted all of us fearfully, I think, though my oldest sister always wore an appreciative air—so far as she could with her eyes tight shut.

The cook, if not in dough, was always called in for family prayers; and the chambermaid, always; the "hired man" usually on Sundays. The family prayers were often varied by the nasal adjunct of extempore pleadings of country ministers come for the Sabbath. Decanters of spirits, kept out of sight in the side-board and rarely seen, were always brought forth for these aged brothers who had driven a long way in the cold. The custom was always extenuated, but the decanters were never brought to the front with eagerness, or pride, or appetite. These country ministers are worth picturing—as old Waldo, lame and bringing his own unleavened bread with him; Nelson, that giant whom I never saw without associating with Goliath, as a sort of cousin of the Philistine. These all we hated to see; we knew they would make long and weary and wandering prayers; it cured the love for long prayers very permanently. My appetite for them has remained in a shrunken state ever since. Why not? Isn't it a clean, a worthy, and a decorous instinct which shivers and shrinks from wearisome



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platitudes in setting forth one's intimate relations with the God of all, toward whom all approaches should be wrapped in awe? No, no, that old "huckstering" of the business of prayer, and burdening it with genuflections, and ponderous sentences, and nasal iterations, was, so far as young minds were concerned, a prodigious mistake. It put dread and shivering and a weary spirit where one should be taught, if teaching could, to put into worship a quiet, glad burst of joyousness and of hope. One little tenderness of admonition from a mother's lips, one little burst of according melody, were worth then, and worth always, more than reams of elongated pulpit-promise and rebuke.

Then the Bible reading urged upon us every day with promises of pay in gifts for well-deserving in this matter. This was dreadful; this had not an ounce of helping toward any good purposes. So much did this feeling keep by me in the development of the next four or five years that, when within the lapse of time I came somehow to a knowledge of the Roman Catholic dispensation in this regard—of excluding the Bible from free family and childish reading, I could not help (in spite of some martyrology in the house, which showed Papish people burning Protestant people) entertaining a very friendly and appreciative regard for this portion of Roman Catholic regimen. Nor, indeed, with the advance of years, have I found reason, on moral or religious grounds, to approve those severely Puritan rulings which enforced the reading of the Scriptures *seriatim* upon young people. They come thus to entertain much such opinion of it as they entertain of any other enforced reading of history or text-books. A distaste and indifference grow in ground thus fertilized, and religious ideas watered with plentiful tears get preposterous shapes.

And then the drill in the catechism, with "reasons annexed," and the long, long hours at church, seeming to listen, but not listening, to the sermons; usually catching the text and holding it in mind as something likely to be called for. The general idea of conversion was of something that might strike like lightning; and

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with this a dreadful sense of the inefficacy of any work or any resolves, or any prayer even, till the lightning of conversion had struck. I think I grew into a hate and dread of that word, and am not over it yet.

Young Donald's years of uninterrupted home life were few. In the autumn of 1830, in company with his father, he made the journey in the family chaise of some thirty-five miles northwestward from Norwich to Ellington, and was entered as a boarding pupil in the school of which his father was then a proprietor. Ellington was a typical New England boarding-school of that day, with many resemblances to contemporary English institutions of the same kind. Its founder and principal was Judge John Hall, a Yale graduate of 1802, who, without being brutal, ruled with inflexible Puritanism. If he was exacting toward the boys under his control, he was first of all exacting toward himself, and at heart was sound. He believed in hard work and rigid discipline, and was especially zealous in the performance of what seemed to the boys a dreary and monotonous form of outward religion. In his own way he was kind, and in spite of all his severity and dreariness, was remembered by most of his pupils with gratitude. Under Judge Hall's direction, with intervals of vacation and enforced rest for the sake of health, Donald remained at the Ellington school until the summer of 1837. Until 1835 he enjoyed there the companionship of his brother Stephen, with whom he roomed.

It must have been a rude shock for the sensitive and delicate lad of eight to be separated from home and thrown upon his own responsibility among an assemblage of rough school-boys. What his emotions were during those first days at Ellington we may read in *Reveries of a Bachelor*.<sup>1</sup> We may

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 159-171; also pp. 230-236, "School Revisited."



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infer something as to the strength of those emotions when we remember that the young man of twenty-eight who wrote the *Reveries* was reviewing his boyish experiences from a distance of twenty years. The narrative there written is rooted deep in fact. The "tall stately building" of the *Reveries*, "with a high cupola on the top," was indeed the Ellington school. "We marched in procession to the village church on Sundays" was, to use a sentence which Mr. Mitchell himself inserted in one of his copies of the *Reveries*, "literally true of the Sundays in the Ellington church." Even the "scholar by the name of Tom Belton, who wore linsey gray, made a dam across a little brook by the school, and whittled out a saw-mill that actually sawed," he identified in the copy of *Reveries* mentioned above as a youngster by the name of Savage, from Hartford, Connecticut. "The head master, in green spectacles," who bade the boys good-by as they started home for term vacations, was none other than Judge Hall.

We may be sure that the youthful dreamer was writing from the heart when he exhorted parents to "think long before they send away their boy—before they break the home ties that make a web of infinite fineness and soft silken meshes around his heart, and toss him aloof into the boy-world, where he must struggle up, amid bickerings and quarrels, into his age of youth." There is much in the tone of this passage to remind us of Mr. Robert Bridges' "Pater Filio"—a poem, it may be said in passing, full of the spirit of Mr. Mitchell. Donald seems, however, to have borne himself well at whatever cost of inner struggle, and to have suffered no unusual indignities. On the whole, his Ellington memories appear to have been happy; it is certain they were ineffaceable.

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In 1903 Mr. Mitchell was invited by a son of Judge Hall to speak at the dedication of a library erected at Ellington in honor of the old teacher. Finding it impossible to accept the invitation, he sent an appreciative letter of reminiscence:

I am very sorry that I cannot join in the pleasant commemorative offices which you have plotted for this week in Ellington, in honor of my old and revered teacher, Judge Hall; pray count me as a listener (though absent) to your memorial exercises!

It is now seventy-three years ago—this autumn—since I first stopped at “Pember’s Tavern,” and walked up next morning, very much awed, to meet “The Principal,” and to make my first acquaintance with the surroundings and the echoing hall-ways of Ellington School! Thenceforward for seven years (with one or two longish vacations) I “came and went”—coming to know excellently well the old meeting-house (as it stood on the central green), and “Pitkin’s Store,” and Martin’s brick shoe-shop, and “Chapman’s Tavern” (on the way to Snipsic), and McCrea’s apple orchard, and—best of all—the leafy door-yard and benign presence of the headmaster, Judge Hall!

’T is well that his reverent descendants should dedicate a library to his memory, and it is well that the people of that Ellington region should have bookish remembrances of the kind master who believed in thorough, painstaking teaching, and no less in all honesties of speech and of living.

In full sympathy with your pious and filial undertaking, I am  
Very respectfully yours,

DONALD G. MITCHELL.

Edgewood, 9th Nov. 1903.

After the beginning of his Ellington residence, Donald never again experienced an unbroken season of home life. Within nine years after his entrance there his parents were dead and their children scattered. The “Peerless Dreamer”

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who was to write so finely and so sympathetically of home, of the joys and sorrows of childhood and youth, very early became acquainted with grief and knew the bitterness of death and of broken hopes. It was during the second year of his Ellington residence that his father died, December 19th, 1831. The mother, never strong and now alone with the burden of a large family, accepted the invitation of her uncle, Judge Elias Perkins, to occupy his home, the Shaw mansion in New London, now the home of the Historical Society. She passed one winter there, and there her posthumous son, Alfred Mitchell, was born April 1st, 1832.

During the seven years of his boarding-school life, Donald's vacations were spent, as circumstances dictated, with Norwich, New London, or Salem relatives. They were not periods of monotony. He never ceased to delight in the memory of a Thanksgiving celebration in 1832 at the home of his uncle, Dr. Nathaniel Shaw Perkins, an eminent New London physician. This celebration he made the foundation of a *Hearth and Home* editorial (November 27th, 1869), which later came to print in *Bound Together*. Another vacation event gives us a glimpse of the spirit of the ten-year-old lad. It seems that he must have been spending the October vacation of 1832 at the home of his uncle, Henry Perkins, in Salem. There were probably those who ventured to wager that Donald had not the ability, or the courage, to ride bareback one of the Perkins mares, whereupon the youngster not only accepted the challenge to ride but rode the entire twelve miles to New London, turning in to the stables of Dr. Perkins "awfully sore" but triumphant. For a reason which now seems undiscoverable, but doubtless for the sake of his health, he passed all of the year from the spring of 1834 to that of 1835 in New London, carpentering during

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most of the winter months. It was at this time, perhaps, that he acquired much of that skill with tools which he turned to such good use throughout his life.

However great may have been his tendency to dream, there was much in the active life of a boys' boarding-school to counteract it. There was also a goodly circle of close relatives among whom he moved with pleasure. One of the warmest of his early friendships was that with his cousin, Mary Perkins, daughter of the Henry Perkins whose mare carried him from Salem to New London. As Mary's mother had died early and her father had married again, she was brought up in Donald's family like a sister. She was ten years Donald's senior. A tender and beautiful intimacy sprang up between the two which was broken only by her death in 1886.

It was a wholesome if somewhat old-fashioned, rigid, and Puritanical atmosphere in which Donald's early years were passed. At home, and among the home friends, he came into constant touch with serious living, high thinking, strict honesties of life and word; there he acquired a share of that liberal cultivation which, as Mark Pattison observes, if not imbibed in the home, neither school nor college ever entirely confers. From the venerable Revolutionary grandfather the boy doubtless heard stirring tales of the early days of the Republic. The books with which he became familiar were good books, the great books of literature. The English of the King James version became, of course, a part of the texture of his mind. He has himself told charmingly of his discovery of *Pilgrim's Progress*; and of how, as an Ellington schoolboy, he used to search copies of the old *New England Weekly Review* for a possible story or poem by John G. Whittier.<sup>1</sup> As the young people of the Mitchell and the

<sup>1</sup> See *Old Story Tellers*, 219-220; and *American Lands and Letters*, 2.190-191.

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Perkins families were growing up, they kept the inevitable "albums" of the period—the small note-books into which they transcribed for one another poems, bits of prose, random thoughts, chance "sentiments;" most of the material being solemn and dignified and not at all in keeping with the state of mind of the average present-day child. One of the earliest specimens of Donald's handwriting (dated April 14th, 1832) is found in such an album of Mary Perkins, in which the ten-year-old had painstakingly transcribed a complete poem of the old-fashioned, sentimental variety, the first stanza of which may go to show that it was, to say the least, rather out of the ordinary for the average ten-year-old boy; but strictly in keeping with the bent of his own mind, which was later to add the touch of sure genius to pensive thoughts and reveries:

Tell me, O mother, when I grow old,  
Will my hair which my sisters say is like gold,  
Grow gray as the old man's, weak and poor,  
Who asked for alms at our pillared door?  
Will I look as sad, will I speak as slow,  
As he when he told us his tale of woe?  
Will my hands then shake, and my eyes be dim?  
Tell me, O mother, will I grow like him?

At a very early age he became interested in drawing, and there remains a sketch which dates from his eighth year. It is an earnest of a talent which he diligently cultivated. Though almost entirely self-taught, he persevered, and developed a great deal of skill in drawing, painting, drafting, and map-making, deriving not only profit from the work but much pleasure as well.

There is no need of attempting to describe the manner

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in which the youthful mind reacted to the world. Mr. Mitchell himself has taken care to do that. Readers of his books may be sure that whenever he falls into reminiscent mood and writes of youth and the long thoughts of youth, they are reading not absolute fact on every page; but an account of fact colored by the blue hazes of sweet and tender memories. As a record of his developing mind and spirit, the *Reveries* and *Dream Life* constitute the very best kind of autobiography not only for the period covered by this chapter but for the time until 1850.

Those seven Ellington years were rich years. During that period were laid the foundations of that liberal education which he turned to so many and so varied uses. During that time, also, he was drinking in with an eagerness that knew no bounds all the beauties of the landscape of central Connecticut. Note this bit of description of an Ellington school-holiday:

There were others who gave the half—if not more—of those sudden holidays to a tramp upon the mountain that flanked the little village—toiling through pasture lands where huckleberries grew and where sheep ran away startled by intruding steps—pausing for a drink from springs that bubbled from the ground, and reaching at length some veteran chestnut, under which the mosses mingled with the turf made delightful lounging place, where we lay for hours, looking down amongst the feeding cattle, and beyond upon the village green, where the houses stood grouped under trees, and upon shining streaks of road which ran out between gray zig-zag fences, till they were lost in distance and the summer haze.<sup>1</sup>

It was on such holiday excursions that the soul of young Donald was all unconsciously feeding itself and burgeoning to fruition.

<sup>1</sup> *Bound Together*, 289.



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He was by inheritance and by natural inclination strongly attached to Connecticut. He loved her rivers, her hills, her valleys, her very stones. Connecticut has had many sons who have brought honor to her. She has had no more loyal son than Donald G. Mitchell, and few who have extended her name and fame farther. Speaking before the Connecticut State Agricultural Society at Bridgeport in 1857, he voiced something of the deep love he felt:

Gentlemen, I rejoice, and rejoice with you, that we are planted where we are, among the hills and boulders of Connecticut. I rejoice in that very roughness which shall quicken our ingenuity, and in those rocks which must be fused and blasted and dispersed as they have been this many a year by our own dominant energy. I do not envy in this comparison the South her golden glories and her tropic luxuriance. I do not envy the West her wide reaches of billowy verdure and her spray of flowers tossing in the wind. I love, and I trust you love, the State we live in; love its scattered school-houses; love its church-spires lighting every landscape; love its ever-during hum of civilization; love its near dash of ocean, whose other and balancing waves are lapping to-day upon the shores of England.

The hold which his native State had taken upon him from his earliest youth was too strong ever to be broken. The spell of his boyhood days was enduring.

At last the Ellington school-days were at an end, and with them the first period of Donald's boyhood. It is well to allow him to tie all the threads of these first fifteen years into a delightful narrative<sup>1</sup> which, as it closes the story, gives us a glimpse of him as he faces toward the widening experiences of youth:

<sup>1</sup> His "Looking Back at Boyhood," *Youth's Companion*, April 21st, 1892. The text here given is that of the *Companion* article revised by Mr. Mitchell, and reprinted in booklet form by the Academy Press, Norwich, Connecticut, 1906.

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I pity those young folks who pass their early years without having any home knowledge of gardens or orchards. City schools and city pavements are all very well; but I think if my childish feet had not known of every-day trampings through garden alleys or on wood walks, and of climbings in hay-lofts or among apple boughs when fruit began to turn, half of the joys of boyhood, as I look back at them, would be plucked away.

So it happens, that when I am asked for some reminiscences of those early days, gone for sixty years or more, the great trees that sheltered my first home stir their branches again. Again I see the showers of dancing petals from the May bloom of apple or of peach trees strewing the grass, or the brown garden mold, with a little of that old exultation of feeling which is almost as good as a prayer—in way of thanksgiving.

I think I could find my way now through all the involvements of new buildings and new plantings on ground that I have not visited for fifty years, to the spot where the blood peach grew, and where the mulberry stood and the greengage loaded with fruit in its harvest time, and the delightful white-blooming crab, lifting its odors into the near window of the "boys' room."

Then there was a curiously misshapen apple tree in the far orchard, with trunk almost prone upon the ground, as if Providence had designed it for children to clamber upon. What a tree it was to climb! There many a time we toddlers used to sit, pondering on our future, when the young robins in the nest overhead would be fully fledged, catching glimpses, too, before yet leaves were fully out, of the brown hermitage or study upon the near, wooded hillside, where my father, who was a clergyman, wrought at his sermons.

It is only a dim image of him that I can conjure up as he strode at noontime down the hill. Catching up the youngest of us with a joyous, proud laugh, he led the toddling party—the nurse bringing up the rear—in a rollicking procession homeward.

A more distinct yet less home-like image of this clergyman I



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have in mind as he leaned over the pulpit of a Sunday, with a solemnity of manner that put one in awe, and with an earnestness of speech that made the Bible stories he expounded seem very real.

But the sermons of those days were very long for children. It must have been, usually, before the middle of the discourse that I went foraging about the square pew, visiting an aunt who almost always had peppermints in her bag, or in lack of this diversion I could toy with the foot-stove under my mother's gown, or build fortifications with the hymn-books.

The "lesser" Westminster Catechism also, with which we had wrestlings, was somewhat heavy and intellectually remote. But it was pleasantly tempered by the play of the parlor fire, or the benignly approving smiles when answerings were prompt. In summer weather the song of a cat-bird or brown-thrasher in the near tulip-tree chased away all the tedium of the Westminster divines, or perhaps lifted it into a celestial atmosphere.

The Bible stories, though, as they tripped from my mother's tongue, were always delightful. I thought then, and still think—at sixty-nine!—that her ways of religious teaching were by many odds better than that of the Westminster divines. And there were some of her readings from the hymn-book that tingle in my ears to-day.

That compulsory Bible-reading, chapter after chapter, and day by day, so common in well-regulated families of those times, has for me a good many ungrateful memories. Wrathful, unwholesome burnings were kindled by this enforced rote reading of a book wherefrom gladsome and hopeful splendors ought to shine.

Of other earliest reading I remember with distinctness that great budget of travel and adventure, good for week-days or Sunday, called the *Pilgrim's Progress*. Mercy, and Great-heart, and Christian, and Giant Despair, too, were of our family. Nor can I cease to call to mind gratefully the good woman, Maria Edgeworth, who in the earliest days of our listening to stories

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made us acquainted with the "Basket-maker's" children who scotched the carriage wheels, and with "Lazy Lawrence" and "Eton Montem."

At what precise age I went to my first school I cannot say. It may have been five or six. A roundabout blue jacket with bell buttons I know I had, and a proud tramp past the neighbors' houses.

The mistress was an excellent woman, everybody said, with a red ruler and discipline, and spectacles. A tap from her spectacle case was a summons every morning to listen to her reading, in quiet monotone, of a chapter in the Bible; after which, in the same murmurous way, she said a prayer. She taught arithmetic out of Colburn, I think, and Woodbridge's Geography to the older ones; but her prime force was lavished upon spelling. We had field-days in that, for which we were marshalled by companies, toeing a crack in the open floor. What an admiring gaze I lifted up upon the tall fellows who went with a wondrous glibness through the intricacies of such words as "im-prac-ti-ca-bil-i-ty"! The mistress had her own curious methods of punishment; and I dimly remember how an obstreperous boy was once shut under the lid of the big writing desk—not for very long, I suspect. But the recollection of it, and of his sharp wail of protest, gave a very lively emphasis to my reading, years after, of Rogers' story of the Italian bride Ginevra, who closed the lid of a Venetian chest upon herself in some remote loft where her skeleton, and her yellowed laces, were found years afterward by accident. Another of the mistress's methods of subduing masculine revolt was in tying a girl's bonnet upon a boy's head. I have a lingering sense now of some such early chastisement, and of the wearisome pasteboard stiffness, and odors of the bonnet!

Of associates on those school benches, I remember with most distinctness a tallish boy [William Henry Huntington, 1820–1885], my senior by two years or so, who befriended me in many skirmishes, decoyed me often into his leafy dooryard, half-way to my home,

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where luscious cherries grew, and by a hundred kindly offices during many succeeding years cemented a friendship of which I have been always proud. A photograph of his emaciated, but noble face, as he lay upon his deathbed in Paris, is before me as I write.

Another first school which I knew as privileged pupil—not esteeming the privilege largely—was in the old town of Wethersfield, where I went on visits to my grandfather. . . . The school to which the old gentleman introduced me solemnly was near by, and of the Lancastrian order. Mr. Joseph Lancaster had come over from England not many years before to indoctrinate America. There was great drill of limbs and voices; but what specially impressed me was a long tray or trough of moistened sand, where we were taught to print letters. I think I came there to a trick of making printed letters which was never lost.

There was a quiet dignity about Wethersfield streets in that day. There were great quiet houses before which mighty trees grew—houses of the Welleses, of the Chesters, of the Webbs—in some of which Washington had lodged in his comings or goings. It was through that quiet Wethersfield street, and by way of the “Stage” office at Slocomb’s Hotel in Hartford, that I must have traveled first to Judge Hall’s Ellington school. There for six ensuing years, off and on, I wrestled with arithmetic and declamation, and Latin and Greek. It was a huge building—every vestige gone now—upon a gentle eminence overlooking a peaceful valley town. I am sure some glimpses of the life there must have found their way into some little books which I have had the temerity to publish.

The principal, a kindly, dignified old gentleman, lived apart, in a house amongst gardens and orchards; but the superintendent, the English master, the matron, and the monitors were all housed with us, and looked sharply after discipline. When I hear boys of near kith complaining of the hardships they endure, I love to set before them a picture of the cold chambers opening upon the corri-

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dors in that huge building. We dressed there by the dim light coming through ventilators over the doors, from lamps swinging in the hall. After this it was needful to take a swift rush out of doors, in all weathers, for a plunge into the washroom door, where we made our ablutions. Another outside rush followed for the doors opening upon the dining-hall, where morning prayers were said. Then an hour of study in a room reeking with the fumes of whale-oil lamps went before the summons to breakfast. There were two schoolrooms. The larger was always presided over by a teacher who was nothing if not watchful. The smaller was allotted to a higher range of boys, and here the superintendent appeared at intervals to hear recitations.

I shall never forget the pride and joy with which I heard the superintendent—I think it was Judge Taft, thereafter Attorney General, and Minister to Russia—announce, once upon a time, my promotion to the south schoolroom. Frank Blair, the general of Chickamauga, was a bench-mate with me there. Once upon a “composition” day we were pitted against each other; but who won the better marks I really cannot say. Teacher Taft [Alphonso, father of the Hon. William Howard Taft] was an athlete. He could whip with enormous vigor, some boys said; but I have only the kindest recollections of him. I used to look on with amazed gratification as he lifted six “fifty-sixes,” strung upon a pole, in the little grocery shop past which we walked on our way to swim in Snipsic Lake.

What a beautiful sheet of water it was in those days! Its old shores are now all submerged and blotted out by manufacturers’ dams. What a joyous, rollicking progress we made homeward, of a Saturday afternoon, with the cupola and the great bulk of building lifting in our front against the western sky!

The strong point of the teaching at Ellington was, I think, Latin. I am certain that before half my time there was up, I could repeat all the rules in Adam’s Latin Grammar verbatim, backward or forward. As for longs and shorts and results and

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quantities and the makeup of a proper hexameter, these were driven into my brain and riveted. Even now I am dimly conscious on uneasy nights, of the

*Quadrupedante putrem sonitu*

making its way through my dreams with the old schoolboy gallop.

I could stretch this screed farther, but the types forbid. The home, with a glimpse of which I began the paper, had been broken up a long time before the high school experience came to an end. Later, in the spring of 1837, the shattered, invalid remnant of its flock was sailing homeward from a winter in Santa Cruz. In July of the same year I set off from Ellington, by the "Hartford, Ware, and Keene Dispatch Line" of stages, seated beside the driver, with twenty dollars in my pocket and my trunk on the roof of the coach, to enter Yale College.

### III

## THE YALE DAYS

The scene now changes to the cloister of a college—not the gray, classic cloisters which lie along the banks of the Cam or the Isis . . . nor yet the cavernous, quadrangular courts that sleep under the dingy walls of the Sorbonne. The youth-dreams . . . begin under the roof of one of those long, ungainly piles of brick and mortar which make the colleges of New England.—*Dream Life*, 118–119.

It would be strange if you, in that cloister life of a college, did not sometimes feel a dawning of new resolves. They grapple you, indeed, oftener than you dare speak of. Here, you dream first of that very sweet, but very shadowy success, called reputation.—*Dream Life*, 132.

The long and close connection of the family with Yale College undoubtedly gave it foremost place in the affections of Alfred Mitchell's sons; and yet Stephen, the first of them, turned elsewhere. Donald used to relate with keen zest how his brother, in the summer of 1835, having driven over to Williamstown, Massachusetts, to visit Williams College, met upon his entrance to the town "only a cow and a horse grazing on the commons," and disgruntled at the rural appearance and quietness of the place, went on to Northampton and entered Amherst. We may be sure, however, that Ellington boys were given a strong urge toward Yale, and there is nothing to show that Donald ever thought of continuing his education elsewhere than at the New Haven college.

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We of the present need, perhaps, to be reminded of the New Haven and the Yale of 1837, when the fifteen-year-old Donald and four of his Ellington comrades, like young knights upon a strange, new quest, first came driving along the pleasant, shaded streets. New Haven was then an isolated town of some 13,000 inhabitants—a kind of backwoods Athens. Not until two years later was railway connection with the outside world established. The Farmington Canal was then a main road of traffic, and stage-coaches the chief means of travel. It was for the most part a wood-burning town, anthracite coal having been introduced only ten years before. Even prior to 1837, however, the beauty-loving zeal of James Hillhouse had been instrumental in transforming New Haven into the “City of Elms.”

The college was equally primitive. The faculty numbered only 31; the total attendance in all departments was but 564. The physical aspect of things on and around the campus has changed almost beyond recognition. “Of the ancient architectural régime at Yale, where there was uniformity, if ugliness; and where one was not disturbed by a variance of style as large and multitudinous as the caprices of the respective builders or donors,” as Mr. Mitchell once playfully but not without seriousness remarked, only Connecticut Hall—the old “South Middle”—remains. The old State House still occupied the corner of Chapel and College Streets, and the three churches on the Green then, as now, lifted their spires upward.

Late in life, Mr. Mitchell wrote two delightful accounts of his college days. These reminiscences, even though only memories of youthful experiences lingering in a mature mind after the lapse of more than forty-five years, are yet worth far more than any conjectural account. In the following



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paragraphs, and in other places throughout this chapter, the two are woven together:

Four of us from the old school at Ellington who were to be bunched together upon the agony seats of examination came bouncing and see-sawing together over the thorough-braces of a Hartford coach—down through Berlin and Meriden and Wallingford, past plains of sand, past lines of poplars, through Whitneyville gun-works and thence by a long, straight stretch past woods and fields and silences (save our own bubbling talk) to the northern end of Temple Street—amazing even then for its beauty of overarching elms—and to the proper beginning of the town, where were then only sparse white houses and lamps that could be counted. But on the east side of the Green, midway between Chapel and Elm streets, where the great suite of the Tontine parlors and the bar-room and hall flung their light across the way, there was brilliancy indeed!

The Tontine of that day was a great hostelry. I know that we all who had been dressing our feathers in country quarters for a progress through the courts of Yale, never dreamed of any other way of entrance than by the lobby of the Tontine. Its very name had a foreign smack which seemed to make it redolent of classicism and of Italy.

The freshman examinations of that far away day were held in the college chapel. There were six of us that went in a little squad together, rallying our spirits by such bantering talk as we could muster, across the Green upon that memorable October morning of 1837. The really fine proportions of the old State House impressed us greatly, and I think a pleasant altercation arose among us as to what Greek temple it was modeled after, whether of Theseus or Diana or the Parthenon; and I remember that the boy who floored us all by his erudition outside was the one who was worst conditioned of us all when we came to the agony in the Chapel.



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The terrors of the ordeal were very much softened by the kindly words of the tall, portly gentleman [Benjamin Silliman], with long head and close-cropped white hair, who presided over the examining board that year; and who held kingship in all the laboratories of the college that year, and many years thereafter. I can recall, as if it were yesterday, the mingled suavity and dignity with which he confronted us, and how the multitudinous crow-foot wrinkles planted themselves on either side of his brow as he gave us a benignant, approving smile, and straightway slipped into a little current of kindly admonition with the same rhythmic gush of words which belonged to him always, and which purled away from his mouth every Sunday night at college prayers in a melodious, alliterative flow of rounded vocables that seems to me must be resounding and reverberating still in some remote heavenly depths. His manner had all the warmth of a blessing in it, and put us into a cheery humor.

Even in those days, when seventy-five made a good class number, it was not easy to find lodging in the college proper. It has sometimes been matter of regret with me that I could not put "South Middle" in the schedule of my youthful opportunities; but I had cozy quarters down College Street beyond Crown in a house [then Mr. Gad Day's] which, with some modern addenda, still beams its old welcome from the up-stair front, broad as the day.<sup>1</sup> There I was chummed with a noble-hearted fellow and

<sup>1</sup> A pleasant additional and confirmatory bit of reminiscence from Mr. Mitchell's Preface to the *Semi-Centennial Historical and Biographical Record of the Class of 1841 in Yale College* must find place here: "There were aspects of college life familiar to those who . . . roomed in college which were totally unknown to those who lived outside. He was cognizant of hazings and smokings, about which as a dweller in the town the present writer knew nothing practically. Nor was 'living outside' the barbarism that it would seem to be now, when college dormitories are every year more and more gorgeously equipped. Yale men of that day were not Sybarites. And if, as townsman, I knew nothing of the hazings and aromatic incense burning about 'South Middle,' I had a very vital knowledge of the hardship of being routed from bed at half-past five, and of toiling in the winter season through snowdrifts (before the days of Goodyear rubber boots) to college prayers at six; where the obscurity of the old chapel was lighted only by whale-oil lamps, flickering in the frosty atmosphere, and where the uneasy shuffling of benumbed feet was sure to

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friend, Jacob Perkins, who in the fifties came to great honor and great success in his native state of Ohio—as he richly deserved to—and died in Cuba [1859] with his harvest of honors only half garnered. For the three succeeding years of the college life I held my eyrie in a little chamber upon the corner of High and Chapel streets [then the home of Dr. J. H. Kain], giving view in those days upon the works of a zealous little cabinet maker, who plied his trade and set his newly varnished tables to dry just where the front porch of the Art School now invites the curious stranger. A snug bureau of this workman's make has been my nightly companion for fifty years. In the rear of these shops, on what is now the college enclosure, perhaps covered by a wing of the new Library, I saw at every nooning, in those far days, a file of black-habited theologues go in to their daily repast in the eating hall, where boarding "rates" were less costly than in the larger one of the college commons. Next door to this refectory lived that great master of the Yale printing offices, B. L. Hamlen, Esq.

Early prayers were appointed in that day at six of the morning, the college bell-ringer beginning the tintinnabulation at that hour, and rounding it off with the tolling and the monitory final jerk of sound at a quarter past. It was no joke to wend one's way from a point in College Street, half way between Crown and George, long before light of a December morning, up the street and into the chapel whose frosted atmosphere showed a steady stream of

come into the pauses of good Dominie Day's tremulous invocations. After this, we groped our way—still under night skies—to the Division Rooms, reeking with oily odors, and showing steaming pans of water upon the tops of the new 'Olmstead's patent double cylinder stoves.'

"By lamp-light—which daybreak presently made dim—we had our drowsy recitation; then came the rush, not over eager, or with much Apician zest, to our 'Commons' breakfast of half-past seven, under the benignant mastership of Caleb Mix, Steward. If a boarder was ill, and proper word came to this Benignity of the Commons, there was sent out a little brown pot with white parallel stripes (capacity three gills), of coffee and milk, with two slices of bread atop of it. And even such a breakfast I did sometimes devour with gusto, when the snows were too deep, or the way not clear for a clandestine slip down Chapel Street to 'Marm Dean's' . . . for her better coffee and an unctuous bit of her buttered waffles."

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vapor rising up from the good old president's lips as he uttered prayer. And when a lively pelting of sleet slanted from the north and a crusted snow was knee-deep under foot, the conditions provoked a good deal of that nerve and athleticism which college men of our day are apt to think has only come in with boating and football.

After the morning service, no matter how sodden the feet, or how aguish the limbs, we marched in a loose, tangled procession to the recitation rooms. These were beastly places in those times, foul with whale-oil smoke, and heated with Professor Olmstead's patent two-cylindereed stoves, far up into the tune of the eighties of Fahrenheit. I have an uneasy sensation of nausea even now as I recall the simmer of the iron pot upon the stove, the steam of wet garments, the ancient fish-oil smell, the rustling of the papers as the tutor smoothed out his check list and probed with thumb and forefinger into his box of names.<sup>1</sup>

[In those days a class was divided into middle, south, and north divisions.] We of the North in that time made up a little world of our own, revolving with others about the greater Kosmos of the college. Only on great field-days, such as grew out of an election of bully, or chairman, or a health lecture from the kindly and venerable Dr. Day, did we meet together as a class during the two first college years.

President Day lived in a quiet little home that with its garden occupied ground now covered by Farnam [Hall], and stretching back over that portion of the campus lying north of North College. By a little postern opening through billowy heaps of lilacs, he wended his way—every morning of winter long before sunrise—to pray for us, and all backsliders!

I remember—in the days when freshman crudities of observation were not as yet worn off—gazing admiringly from the old timber bridge which crossed the canal at Chapel Street, upon a gaily

<sup>1</sup> In connection with these reminiscences the reader will thoroughly enjoy the "Cloister Life" chapter of *Dream Life*, and will recognize the solid foundation of fact therein.

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equipped barge with "splendid accommodations for six passengers"—drawn by two horses with ribbons flaunting from their headgear, and setting off with the music of a bugle toward the upper wilds of Farmington and Northampton. I do not think that even the echoing bugle notes beguiled many of us to voyaging upon the canal. As a rule, we preferred the "powerful steamer *New York*, Captain Stone, Commander." There were many stage coaches, too, plying to the interior and along the shore; these having their rendezvous for the most part at an old coach tavern with a Lombardy poplar near it which once stood where the post-office building now [1895] shadows a great breadth of pavement and of car tracks. 'T was known, too, and told to incredulous up-country folk, that at this coach centre twenty-five people had been "booked" in a single day for New York!

The course of study in Mr. Mitchell's day was intended to occasion hard work. Latin, Greek, mathematics, and philosophy formed the bulk of it, supplemented by rhetoric, logic, natural philosophy, history, Kent's *Commentaries on American Law*, Paley's *Natural Theology*, and Wayland's *Political Economy*. Especial attention was given to literary training. Written translations from Latin authors were presented weekly by the freshman class; specimens of English composition were exhibited once a fortnight by each member of the sophomore and the junior classes; the junior and the senior classes had forensic disputations once or twice a week before their instructors; and "very frequent exercises in declamation" before the tutors, the professor of oratory, and the faculty and students in the chapel, made up a tale of work from which there could be little escape.<sup>1</sup> A faculty of strong and stern but kindly men, assisted by tutors, administered this curriculum. Benjamin Silliman presided

<sup>1</sup> Yale catalogues, 1837-1841.

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over the departments of chemistry, pharmacy, mineralogy, and geology; James L. Kingsley was professor of Latin, Theodore D. Woolsey, of Greek, Chauncey A. Goodrich, of rhetoric and oratory; Denison Olmstead had charge of the natural philosophy and astronomy, Anthony D. Stanley, of the mathematics.

Of these courses and these teachers, Mr. Mitchell retained to the end of his life the clearest and kindest of memories:

There were [he wrote in 1882] lectures on law, on Paley's *Natural Theology*, on rhetoric and forensic exercises, which brought us together in the old "Rhetorical Chamber" for the most part. Few things in our disputatious life are finer, I think, than the fresh aroma of unshackled, adventurous, exuberant, lusty college oratory. But there was eloquence of another sort when our professor of rhetoric, Dr. G[oodrich], an intensely nervous man, with a wild eye and a bulging forehead, set himself to the task of demonstrating how the great orators of England had talked in their time. It was no perfunctory way he had; but he grew, swift as language could carry him, into the old occasions of parliamentary debate, lashed himself into more than Burke's rage over the wrongs of the poor Begums of India, thundered his anathemas, with eye flashing and lips trembling, upon the head of Hastings, then fell away as easily into an oily tone and sardonic irony as he read through, with faultless cadence, long passages from the "Letter to a Noble Lord." Burke and Pitt and Sheridan and Chatham grew under his declamatory power and his admiring comment into a lordly stature from which in these forty years past I fear they have fallen lamentably away.

Still more distinctly than the eloquent-talking Professor G[oodrich], I have in mind the lithe old gentleman [David Daggett] with the springy step and the eager, eagle-like look, which his great Roman nose made vivid, who talked to us of Kent, his *Commen-*

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*taries*, and of the wide realms of law. He was fast verging on eighty in those days, yet erect and agile, and his voice sonorous. He was bravely outspoken, too, and his political affiliations—for he brought senatorial dignities with him—shone out in little swift gleams of satire that garnished his law talk. He had been judge, senator, and chief justice, and we stood in great awe of him. “Young gentlemen,” I think I hear him say—he was always courteous—“Young gentlemen, for more than fifty years I have been engaged in courts and offices of law, and in all that long period I have met with many and many an instance where parents have despoiled themselves for the benefit of their children; but scarce one child, scarce one [a little louder] who has despoiled himself for the benefit of his parents.” No figure of the old college days is more present to me than that of this active, brisk, erect old gentleman, in small clothes and in top boots, he being the last, I think, to carry these august paraphernalia of the past along New Haven streets. He picked his way mincingly over the uneven pavements, tapping here and there with his cane, rather to give point to his reflections, I think, than from any infirmness; bowing pleasantly here and there with an old-school lift of the hat; full of courtesies, full of dignity, too; and a perfect master of deportment.

Donald’s college life began under a shadow. All of his school-days, in fact, from the early Ellington period, were disturbed by his own ill health and the sufferings and deaths of those in his family circle. His earliest memories were associated with the deaths of an infant brother and a baby sister. He felt keenly the sufferings of his brother Louis, four years his junior, upon whom a childhood illness, badly treated, had left serious physical disabilities, against which he struggled calmly, patiently, and cheerfully all his life. From the Woodbridge ancestry there came a tendency to consumption, which laid a heavy toll upon the family of Alfred Mitchell—Donald himself overcoming the disease only by most favoring circumstances of which we shall learn



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later on. During the winter of 1836-1837, Mrs. Mitchell, with Stephen and Elizabeth—those upon whom the disease had laid strongest hold—sought refuge from the rigors of the New England climate in Santa Cruz, returning, a “shattered, invalid remnant,” on June 10th, 1837, just a few weeks before Donald’s visit to New Haven to arrange the details of his entrance to Yale.

Stephen had returned from Santa Cruz so much stronger that he undertook the management of his mother’s farm at Salem, where he became greatly interested in stock-breeding. In November 1838, while attending the fair of the American Institute in New York City, he contracted a cold which sealed his pulmonary difficulties. Donald, who was following his brother’s farming operations with zeal, and who was undoubtedly urging even then those amenities of farm life which he later advocated with such grace and telling effect, records the fact that under the steady approaches of the disease, Stephen gave up active farming and stock-raising for poultry-keeping; and afterward, when too weak to go out to the hen-house, turned to the care of cage-birds in his room. On the 29th of March 1839, the mother died. Within a few weeks Stephen followed her. Elizabeth, the beautiful and fragile fifteen-year-old sister, lingered with little more than two years of life before her. As yet, the scourge had scarcely laid its touch upon Lucretia, the last remaining sister.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The following record of the children of Alfred and Lucretia Mitchell tells its own story:

Lucretia Woodbridge, b. April 1816; d. in infancy.  
Stephen Mix, b. April 13th, 1818; d. May 30th, 1839.  
Lucretia Woodbridge, b. June 24th, 1820; d. Jan. 16th, 1845.  
Donald Grant, b. April 12th, 1822; d. Dec. 15th, 1908.  
Elizabeth Mumford, b. July 7th, 1824; d. Sept. 6th, 1841.  
Louis, b. Nov. 7th, 1826; d. July 15th, 1881.  
Mary Perkins, b. April 1829; d. April 1st, 1830.  
Alfred, b. March 1830; d. in infancy.  
Alfred, b. April 1st, 1832; d. April 27th, 1911.

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Throughout the four years such events constituted the melancholy background of Donald's college life. All of this time his own health was threatened—he never from childhood knew rugged health—and there settled down upon him a seriousness and a gloom from which he never entirely emerged.

In the summer of 1839 came the final breaking-up of the Mitchell home. Gen. William Williams, an old Norwich friend of the father and the mother, was appointed to the guardianship of the children. Donald had been spending most of his college vacations with his cousin, Mary Goddard, who, since 1838, had been living upon the old Mumford homestead, Elmgrove, in Salem. After his mother's death, Elmgrove became his home, and the self-sacrificing cousin became to him a foster-mother. Indeed, for the three surviving members of Alfred Mitchell's family—Donald, Louis, and Alfred—Elmgrove, and later Glenside, her Norwich residence, were always homes, and Mary Goddard always a mother.

It was Donald's custom during his college course to buy a horse and buggy in New Haven and drive to Salem. After a summer of farm work he returned in the same way to New Haven and disposed of his equipage. As he used to say, "those were the days when college students did not *keep* their own horses." During his long drives of more than fifty miles over the quiet roads and through the drowsy villages of Connecticut, the youthful student had plenty of time for reflection and revery. He came to know all the moods of this Connecticut country, and began that habit—so manifest throughout his writings—of investing natural scenery with his own feelings. If he knew sorrow, he also knew the compensations of Nature and turned to her as to a mother for



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comfort and healing. Home-loving by native grace, a grace nurtured by the sorrows and experiences of those early days, he came to look forward to the possession of a home of his own as the "bright, blessed, adorable phantom which sits highest on the sunny horizon that girdeth life."<sup>1</sup> In his college room he likewise cultivated the homelike qualities. One of his first purchases at Yale was a painting for his room. A bureau, hand-made to his order, occupied a corner. Books and small bits of bric-à-brac chosen for their personal appeal added their cheer and comfort to the surroundings. Like a nautilus, he was at work upon the chambered cell wherein year after year his soul was to build more stately mansions.

Notwithstanding the family sorrows, Donald held closely to his college tasks, and there is abundant evidence that he went in for study. "We had to buckle to it," was his own comment in after years. His scholarship record, perhaps because of the conditions at home and the uncertain state of his own health, was not unusually high. He made a good record in all subjects, but gave his attention chiefly to literature. He was thus early, by sure instinct, seeking the things which would be of most value to him in his life-work. During the college year 1838-1839 he had the satisfaction of reporting to home friends that he had been awarded eight dollars as a first prize for some Latin translation. Under the direction of Professor Woolsey he seems to have enjoyed to the full the work in Greek. In a first edition of Longfellow's *Voices of the Night*—one of his favorite books in college and always—there is a pencilled verse translation of the lines from Euripides with which Mr. Longfellow prefaced his poems—lines, as Mr. Mitchell wrote later, that "caught a gay scansion from many an enthusiast who was not given

<sup>1</sup> *Reveries*, 79-80.

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to Greek in general." The translation bears date of 1840, and may be taken as indicative of the skill in language which the boy of eighteen was acquiring:

Good old Father Night,  
Sleep-giver to toiling men,  
Come hither, haste hither thy flight,  
To the Agamemnonian home;  
Else our cares and our sorrows will quite  
Our hearts overcome, overcome!

As a well-earned reward of his school-days, classical phrases and references—what Paul Elmer More refers to as a "trick of easy, high-bred quotation"—came spontaneously to Mr. Mitchell throughout life, and add much to the pleasure derived from a reading of his literary work.

Mr. Mitchell has not left us in doubt concerning his literary enthusiasms in college. His casual references to the books and the men that interested him enable us to form a pretty clear notion of his growing mind. He kept an eager watch for the work of the best contemporary writers, and began the collection of an extensive library. As a freshman he bought and enjoyed the first *Poems* of Oliver Wendell Holmes. Emerson's address on "The American Scholar" (1837), and in particular his "Address to the Senior Class in Divinity College, Cambridge" (1838), were earnestly scanned by the young collegian. "I remember well," he wrote, "how the echoes of that talk to divinity students came eddying over the quiet latitudes of New Haven, challenging eager young thinkers to a strange unrest, and inviting the heartiest maledictions of orthodox teachers, who would consign this audacious talker to quick oblivion."<sup>1</sup> The writings of the

<sup>1</sup> *American Lands and Letters*, 2. 94.

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"yellow-haired, blue-eyed giant, John Wilson," came in for their share of admiration. A complete set of Edmund Burke found place upon his book-shelves and came to keen and appreciative reading. Within a twelvemonth of their issue (1836-1837), as he took pleasure in recalling, the beautiful sextet of Moxon's volumes of Wordsworth were lying thumb-worn on his desk.<sup>1</sup> In the winter of 1840 he was an interested listener to Richard H. Dana's lectures on Shakespeare. "We upon the oaken benches were not great lovers of sermons in those days, or of preachers," wrote Mr. Mitchell, yet he bears witness to the pleasure with which he and his fellows listened to the occasional preaching of Horace Bushnell in the old college chapel.<sup>2</sup> One of his college notebooks contains excerpts from more than 120 writers, English, French, Greek, and Latin, with many of his favorite Biblical passages—all neatly copied out, and in many instances commented upon.

While he applied himself with commendable diligence to his studies and enjoyed thoroughly the freedom of indulging his own tastes in outside literary readings, it is certain that he shrank from what is to-day thought of as social life. "I was given to solitude rather than to companionship during my childhood and youth," is the substance of a comment on his early life which he once made. That intense shyness which was to be so marked a quality of his entire mature life was now during his college days beginning to manifest itself. His daughter Elizabeth recalls his telling that while a student he went out only once to supper and then was "frightened to death." And yet in the face of his diffidence he made strong friendships and was what would now be

<sup>1</sup> *English Lands, Letters, and Kings*, 3.303.

<sup>2</sup> *American Lands and Letters*, 2.52-53.

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called popular. He was one of the most influential members of the Linonian Literary Society, an Alpha Delta Phi, a Chi Delta Theta, and a member of Skull and Bones.

In February 1882, a college-mate wrote Mr. Mitchell a letter which throws light for us upon the distant college days and enables us to see and hear young Donald, the eager representative of his society, speaking in behalf of Linonian:

It was the first or second Saturday of our fall term [1840], or it may have been Wednesday, in the afternoon [wrote Mr. J. W. Waterman], when all newcomers were summoned to hear a "statement of facts." . . . I went to hear the man who spoke for the Linonians. There was a crowd on Chapel Street opposite South College. The orator had just commenced. He was a very graceful young man with a bright eye and brown, wavy hair and pale student face; he had a very winning voice and excellent elocution. I was completely carried away by him. I thought I had never heard oratory before; and as the speaker had no notes, I took it for granted that he was speaking extemporaneously, and I wondered not so much at the rare gift of speech of the man, as I did at the supposed demonstration that three years of college cultivation was sure to develop such consummate flowers; and poor little fifteen year old freshman that I was, I had no doubt that in the far away future of my senior year, I too would be an orator, and be able to roll off the periods in the same graceful and captivating way.

As I have said, Donald's chief interests in college were literary, centring particularly upon oratory and composition. To both he applied himself diligently. His contributions as a junior to the *Yale Literary Magazine* probably won him election to the 1841 Board of Editors and gave him opportunity to indulge in a way highly attractive to him his fondness for original composition. To the semicentennial number of the *Magazine* (February 1886) he contributed an



*Donacu G. Mitchem*

*From a sketch made in New Haven, Connecticut, in 1839.*



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article on "Old Magazine Days at Yale" from which we may quote:

The book-store of Herrick & Noyes . . . on Chapel Street used to be a great loitering place for book-loving students in our "fresh" days, forty odd years ago; and I think it was there—sometime in the late autumn of 1837—that I came upon first sight of that Yale magazine, from whose brown covers the old gentleman in big cuffs and with big flaps to his waistcoat, has been looking out benignly upon the world for fifty years. There was a respect for such literary monuments in those early and innocent times before as yet the virus of athletics had infected the college mind, and when we looked with a becoming awe upon the golden spatula of  $\Phi\text{BK}$  and the tri-cornered Delta of the "fine writers." . . . From the editors of 1840—we of 1841—received the good will of the concern on a certain festive occasion at the Moriarty's of that day, abundant manuscripts and—unless I mistake—a bouncing debt. This, however, did not forbid a flow of humor at the festivities hinted at, and a limited popping of corks—small beer, doubtless. I am confident that mineral waters had not then come into vogue.

Of my associates upon the Board only two, I think, are now [1886] living: one, the venerable Dr. Yarnall of West Philadelphia, beyond us in years and dignity—then, as now—and relieving the quiet cares of his Rectory . . . by flashes of his early but always good-humored sarcasm. Another was the scholarly Professor Emerson, with eyes of poetic outlook, living many a year now in a quiet collegiate home of the West (Beloit) and enjoying—as of old—the classic odors that filter through the pages of Homer and of *Æschylus*.

I cannot leave these old magazine days and memories without some notice of that most excellent—but sometimes irascible—old gentleman who was in those days, printer to the college; I mean Benjamin Hamlen. His printing office (and ours) was upon some top floor reached by narrow halls and stairs . . . a roomy office



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with hand-presses only, creaking and groaning at their work, and a pleasant outlook over the Green, from the little table where we corrected proofs. And the master printer, who presided over cases and presses, is as plainly before me as if I saw him only yesterday. Tall, gaunt, gray-eyed, with a goodly Roman nose, hair straying and scattery, with color of age upon it, face reddened (but rather, I think, by the storms of life and the office, than by any alcoholic provocatives), having his own imperial notions about punctuation, a king of orthography, indulging on occasions in high theologic discourse, watchful of all the galleys, and at a big blunder of a compositor, breaking out somewhiles into discourse that was not theologic—this was our printer!

He lived in a small white house . . . between the Art School and the Library. From his door there I used to see him from my window . . . striding forth with his scant camlet cloak close wrapped about him, his locks straying out from under his well-worn silken beaver—braving all weathers; perhaps in the flurries of November carrying a bead of dew at the tip of his Roman nose; always eager and earnest, and bound straight to the line of his daily duties.

I do not know when he died, or where he is buried; but for me his memorial is severely simple and is Latinized—upon the initial page of the old Triennial [catalogue]:

B. L. HAMLEN, TYPOGRAPHO.

In a little, green, leather-bound volume, bearing upon its title-page in his own handwriting the legend "A Memorial of College Follies," Mr. Mitchell has preserved his contributions to the *Yale Literary Magazine*. The papers total about 160 pages of solid print—no inconsiderable output for a student busy with the regular work of the curriculum. Among them are a series of "Sketches of Real Life, or Scraps from a Doctor's Diary," written, according to his own note, "as will sufficiently appear, in imitation of Dr. Warren's cele-



brated *Diary of a Physician*.”<sup>1</sup> The note goes on to inform us that the admiration which the young writer felt for “the graphic force and mastering pathos of those *Passages* induced the attempt.” Then there is a sketch, “The Heir of Lichtenstein [*sic*],” the name undoubtedly suggested by Wilhelm Hauff’s *Lichtenstein*; a series of papers entitled “The Mirror, or Tablets of an Idle Man;” essays on James Fenimore Cooper, Bulwer, and Sir Walter Scott; a comparison of Burke and Newton; and a few pages of hurried “Thoughts upon Novel Reading,” concerning which another note informs us that it was “written in the library room of the Brothers in Unity and furnished to the printer without revision.”

Donald’s work on the *Magazine*, thoroughly congenial to himself and undoubtedly one of the most valuable features of his college course, was not permitted to proceed without question. His guardian, Gen. Williams, a business man of practical turn and without particular æsthetic or literary taste, took the aspiring author severely to task. The letters written by Gen. Williams have not been found; fortunately, however, two of Donald’s exist. Reading these, we may not only enjoy Donald’s spirited defense of his pursuits, but also form a good notion of his reaction to college life and its relations to the larger life beyond the confines of the Yale campus. Very few of his college letters remain; it is indeed fortunate that two of such length and content are available:

Yours of the 30th [he writes from New London, Conn., under date of Sabbath eve, May 3d, 1840] at the hands of Elizabeth was duly received, and I feel happy in replying to many suggestions which you have thrown out in connection with, or rather as corol-

<sup>1</sup> *Passages from the Diary of a Late Physician*. By Dr. Samuel Warren. Published originally in *Blackwood’s Magazine*, 1832-1837.

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laries to, the observations upon expenditures;—happy, because they are such suggestions as favor the introduction of a defence on my part (otherwise uncalled for) of the course in general pursued by me since entering college. The subject of expenses I briefly dismiss with a corroboration of the opinion expressed in my last, to reduce as far as possible my outlay. In introducing your homily upon Education, you seem to have labored under some mistake in mentioning “liability to expense in writing for publication.” I supposed I had made you fully acquainted with the harmlessness of the conduct of the *Magazine* in that point of view, in assuring you that no number of the *Magazine* was printed until *sufficient monies* were received to publish the entire volume. But apparently I have been mistaken; from what cause I am ignorant—surely not from my own misrepresentation.

You illustrate an injudicious attention to the *Magazine* by recurring to the *self-interested* accountant, and to the indigent student; and conclude by enquiring, ‘does *it* complete the education of either so well?’ You have given, if you recollect, the illustration without a *full* application. I am therefore in ignorance of the exact nature of your views. (Think me not pedantic, I beg; you have doubtless omitted something it had been your intention to insert.) Nevertheless, from the general tenor of your remarks, I imagine you are disposed to object to my application to writing, and to elicit (with all deference) a defence on my part, hinted at in the opening of this sheet.

You observe a very fantastic and unnatural distinction between the real ends of education and the pursuits of literature in writing. Now whatever may be the immediate results of the recitations or lessons, nothing can, or need be plainer than that the great and only aim of all collegiate education is to acquire a force of intellect adequate to command the great mind of society and the world, in speaking and writing. Writing, then, is no more diverse from the end of a collegiate course than the conduct of that accountant who, while in the employ of others, invests from time to time some

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capital of his own, that he may combine an exercise of the reflecting powers of his mind (sagacity and discretion) with the *mechanical* labor necessarily requisite; it is no more irrelevant to the great goal of a scholar's ambition than the labor of that youthful rustic who, while bracing his muscles with the humbler organs of husbandry, at times places his hand to the *plow* and upturns that sod which in future years is to warm and nurture the germ of his worldly wealth! Indeed, so important, so entire an aim is the power to write and to speak well that our rhetorical professor has again and again impressed it upon us in such terms as these: "The text-books are worth nothing to you in comparison with the great ends of a collegiate discipline—power of ruling mind;—they are the mere alphabet to form the language." So much for the distinction you have seen fit to make between education and an application to writing. I have dwelt upon it in showing the fallacy of any contradistinction, because it would be exceedingly galling to my feelings to realize that I had chosen the part of *uneducated* mind.

Of what utility, you then ask, are the text-books and an *unremitting* attention? I answer—waiving the consideration that even now  $\frac{1}{3}$ rd of all regular college exercises are confined exclusively and fully to writing and speaking and the rules of that rhetoric which you are disposed to undervalue—I answer it is to befit the mind for more vigorous attainment in after life; but it effects this not through a neglect of the pursuit in college—which would be but learning the rules of a dance without ever following its mazes—but in constant and simultaneous exercise of all those faculties which present knowledge in the form of speech and writing. Again you ask, is not the exercise prescribed by the regular college authorities sufficient for practical application? I answer—it is as much as they dared expect, though not so much as they could wish; and let me check your triumph over *my* exposition of their views, in observing that *nearly* all the writings in the periodical referred to, are nothing more than the regular college exercises revised and polished for the acceptance of the reading public; and

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moreover that the *Yale Literary Magazine* is taken and supported zealously by almost every member of the faculty, they believing it no less honorable to the literary character of the institution than improving to the minds of its conductors. Indeed, it is the foster child of their nurture, which we humbly trust shames not its parentage! It excites a noble sentiment of emulation throughout college—is a monthly report to friends of comparative attainments—calls for vigorous action in the walks precedent to the stormy strife upon the great arena of life—in fine, it constitutes the columns and the entablature to the great temple of collegiate pursuits—not indispensable to its permanence, but essential to its symmetry, its majesty, and its perfection!

Would, then, the man at thirty be the gainer from attention to such an object? Would the eagle pierce more buoyantly the empyrean for trying its strength while yet a nursling of the eyrie? or can he hope for strength to soar in face of heaven by *merely gorging his carrion prey*? Think not, then, so objectionably of a course both practical and calculated to discipline for future exercise. But do you imagine a necessary neglect of other branches? Nothing is farther from the truth, so unreal that it is a general truth, that he who is most stored with knowledge there acquired is most profuse in its exhibition, that he who is best disciplined is most active in presenting thought.

Thus far in answer to your suggestions, and I conclude, trusting that you will read this letter divesting yourself of prejudice and a remembrance of *my youthful* prejudices;—trusting that you will weigh the ideas suggested not as my own ardent, passionate exclamations, but as *statements* to be submitted to the sober test of reason; and if they be maimed by a shaft from her quiver, I yield with due submission.

I take this opportunity [he continues in a letter dated July 13th, 1840, written from New Haven] to acknowledge the receipt of a check in the Merchants Bank of New York for \$100;—also I thus

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soon would reply to yours of the 10th inst., inasmuch as I was considerably disturbed by its contents. I think, without conceit, that few are more disposed than myself at my age to receive and to be guided by the advice of friends; and let me assure you that yours is treasured in a grateful mind. But at the same time I think that you are somewhat deceived relative to my actual regard for matters of a trifling, *i. e.*, purely literary nature, and that you are mistaken relative to the time expended by me upon the magazine in question—in short, that your fears are in a measure groundless. For instance, the very article which has suggested to you, perhaps, the kind admonitions offered in your letter was written for a literary exercise which I engaged in in common with a great portion of the class. Classical studies such as I presume you refer to—languages, etc.—are now completed and our attention is directed at present to history, astronomy, and some principles of natural philosophy, all of which are to be succeeded by those pursuits calculated to foster and sustain a power of coping with *thought and language*; viz., logic, rhetoric, natural theology, and mental philosophy, all of which I purpose to pursue with zeal and vigor.

Relative to the acquirement of practical knowledge, it must be considered that college is the last place in the world to attain this kind of knowledge amid the pursuit of mathematical demonstrations and the pleas of Demosthenes 300 years before Christ; yet I am free to assert with confidence that there are not four persons in my own class whom I would be willing to acknowledge my superiors in any practical knowledge whatever, owing chiefly to the peculiar circumstances into which I have been thrown. Take, for instance, the single matter of accounts: slight as my knowledge is, I doubt not I better understand its theory and practice than almost any individual with whom I am associated here. I am throwing myself open to a serious charge of egotism, I see; but nevertheless, let your kind confidence be my apology. I am not insensible, I assure you, to the necessity of practical knowledge and (if I may so speak) to its steady, vigorous, full *application*.

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I am not in love with *literature*—not rapt into a morbid enthusiasm for mere books and writing; but pursue its more essential branches as a *means* and not as an *end*—as a means of disciplining my mind for vigorous thought—as a means of acquiring knowledge—as a means of ability to render that knowledge effective in its highest capabilities; and *when* a profession is before me, it is to that and that alone I mean to concentrate my energies—if health favor—with untiring application, and if then, despite my efforts, I shame my friends from lack of natural endowment, be it so, for God “hath made us, and not we ourselves!”

Meanwhile, be assured your advice and your wishes in all my schemes will be kept steadily in view; indeed I am extremely sensitive to the slightest censure, and hence by its *rankling* it is always sure to effect some good.

Dropping the more severe manner of an explanation, permit [me] to solicit your advice upon my leave a year hence. Law, I think upon the whole best suited to my capacities, and my only fear is that my strength and health would not sustain me under its excessive labor. Now, would a residence on a farm for a year or more after leaving college consort with your views of attaining practical usefulness? It would give a stock of health and some leisure for keeping alive my acquaintance with books.

Apposite to your remarks is a fact related of Edmund Burke, the greatest of English statesmen. He spent his time in youth in a haphazard manner, pursuing the bent of his own inclinations; “but,” says his historian, “let none do likewise unless they are first convinced that they possess the *genius* of Burke.”

. . . I have some thoughts of soliciting a boarding place at Salem with Mr. Goddard for the coming vacation. . . .

After almost four years of such really strenuous work as the old Yale curriculum occasioned, and two years of energetic and sometimes feverishly hurried writing for the *Magazine*, Donald must have come to the delights of the senior



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vacation with feelings of relief and deep satisfaction. The flavors of it he treasured as among his richest possessions:

That old six weeks' vacation for the seniors which once intervened between what was called class day and commencement was a glorious festal time for those who had finished their courses unconditioned . . . six weeks of triumphant idleness and dignity [he wrote in 1895]. To have the freedom of those august courts of learning (the Atheneum and Lyceum) and no tingling horror of the college bell! The sophomores regarded us seniors with a new admiration, and freshmen were transfixed with awe as we strode past them on the campus. Then came, too, the victorious forays in companies of two or five to Morris Cove or Savin Rock (whose single, great shambling hostelry then flanked the cliff), or to Guilford Point, astonishing the villagers on the way and winning the smiles of those alert young women who already scented "Commencement" in the air.

The privileges of that last, long vacation gave us also the freedom of the great Tontine tavern, which then dominated with its vast hulk, the whole eastern side of the Green; and we strode up and down its majestic corridors—fearless of prying monitors or tutors—and snuffing with independent air the odors of those fragrant stews which . . . in the far away days I speak of mingled regalingly with the odors of stables and of blooming house-gardens that stretched all the way down to the banks of the canal.

At last came the day of graduation, August 18th, 1841. It is worth our while to look at one of those long-gone commencements through Mr. Mitchell's eyes:

All the ministers and the deacons in the near towns put on clean collars and their best toggery for commencement day. The old railing about the Green was a hitching place for half its circuit. Old ladies living along the out-of-town roads plotted for the return of their best bombazines from the mantua makers for the com-

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mencement scrimmage. The seniors coming back from that "lark" of a six weeks' vacation . . . sun-browned and chirrupy, beamed with a contagious joyousness; the aunts and cousins and sweet-hearts of these last, and of the new come "fresh," flooded all the walks with flashing cambrics and cheeriness. Even before the great procession—headed by the sheriff of the county, and with constables for marshals—had meandered its way down from the Lyceum doorstep to the front of Centre Church, the galleries were packed—the windows all open, showing piles of muslin and fluttering fans, while the whole interior air of the temple was heavy with the incense of pinks, fennel, new prunella shoes, and late summer flowers.

The last year's freshmen (we had begun even then to call ourselves sophomores) following immediately after the constabulary, and dividing ranks at the door, posted their strongest men—the class "bully" foremost—to hold back the surging crowd, which, when the dignitaries—governors, senators, doctors—had wriggled through and were installed upon their lifted rostrum, flowed in with a swift tide and made the whole church a sea of heads.

Among the dignitaries in the times I best remember, the curious might have pointed out the tall, spare figure of Gov. Ellsworth, perhaps flanked by ex-Gov. Edwards, and Judge Daggett, serene in his top boots, and the antique head of Dr. Chapin, and Senator Smith, or mayhap Gen. Kimberly (who loved his own chafing dish at the Tontine tables), and the Puritan dignity of Rev. Noah Porter [father of the Noah who became president of Yale], and, not least regarded by reason of the *auctoritatem meam* with which he was invested, the kindly President of the College, Dr. Day. He was not a man showing at his best in fêtes . . . nor yet in his *Algebra*, or *Treatise on the Will*; but in the quiet of his own North College room, when he beamed a benignant pardon upon some offending student.

Orations, dissertations, "sacred music," boomed in the pent air where fans were all a-flutter. Possibly some dramatic fragment



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like *Salathiel*, by John Brocklesby, varied the monotone in black. In the "sacred music" I think there may have been a faint "flute" note—of violins, I am not so sure—but the bass-viol was, I think, wrested from the grip of Satan at an earlier period than its smaller and saucier sister. There was an interlude at noon, and a breaking of cold meats, at which all the hungry dominies of near towns regaled themselves.

Then came again—as the sun turned its sky journey and smote hotly from the west—a new booming of the music, a livelier fluttering of the fans, and a new threshing of such old truisms as "Truth is mighty and will prevail!" The dignitaries wax hot and weary, and are more than ready for the final benediction which follows upon the distribution of the honors *ad primum gradum*. Then a last burst of irregular music swells again; the fans cease their flutter; the crowd eddies into slow, murmurous currents that flow down the aisles and out into the breezy air of . . . afternoon.

In the face of all handicaps the young man had acquitted himself well during the four years, and was chosen by his class to deliver the valedictory oration. The subject of his address was *The Dignity of Learning*. When he arose to pronounce the oration, July 7th, 1841, he was almost too ill and weak to stand. His pale, handsome face was never forgotten by those who were present, nor the affecting manner with which he turned to the white-haired President Day to bid farewell to him and to the faculty. The disease which had already scourged his family had laid strong hold upon Donald.

*The Dignity of Learning*, an oration written and pronounced by a young man just turned of nineteen, may well be read and pondered by American college seniors of the present. It bears witness to the fact that Donald had read widely, had assimilated his reading, had formulated definite

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convictions upon important questions, and acquired the ability to express those convictions in clear and compelling English. The substance of the oration is worthy of preservation here:

What is the worth of learning [he asks at the outset], that we have spent the flower of our life in its acquisition? Wherein consists its true dignity, and how shall it be best maintained in the field now in reality before us? . . . [Its true dignity consists] in an independence of all save truth; in a consistency regulated only by the same severe standard, and in a strict subordination to morality. When learning concedes a dependence on any other sovereign than truth, it is no longer learning, but only a gross debasement of its title. . . . The dignity of American learning must rest in a great measure on its restraint and modification of public sentiment. . . . Public opinion in America needs the constant, efficient, renovating action of learning, in view of her political institutions. . . .

Democrat is becoming the by-word for political distinction; and he who dares to speak in disrespect of the Democracy is a libeler of his country's fame. But while I yet stand within this sacred nursery of truth, I dare to say, and say proudly too, that our government is not a democracy. The representative system is the glory of our institutions;—a system which, while it designates our legislators as the instruments of power, marks them out none the less surely as the men possessed of that intellectual ability which can control the functions of a great government. And it is the submission of the people to the wisdom of their superiors that constitutes the grand conservative principle of our institutions; and the bare fact that such submission is voluntary constitutes our freedom. . . . It is by no means too much to say that educated mind is far from holding to itself in our country that independence and firmness of which as the guardian of truth it should be proud. It is yielding too much to the bias of popular

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sentiment, nor dares resist manfully the sweep of public opinion. . . . Instead of guiding sentiment by the force of a truth-seeking mind, learning too often waits the flow of opinion and passes undisturbed down its lulling tides; not from scorn of what the truth may be, but from greater love of public regard; and as it stoops to popular caprice, it must like Galileo rise with a whispered condemnation of the act. It is no less lamentable than true that popularity is the general ground of eminence in America.

. . . The dignity of learning is not here [in America] to be maintained by newness, or by strange conceits, but by a correct and chastened guidance, by more reverence and deeper study of what has gone before, rather than [by] hasty attempts to emulate. The body of our letters for a long time to come cannot differ materially from those of Britain. The similarity of our manners and language forbid. Characters and scenes can never make a difference while principles and actions are the same. . . . The nice distinctions in our political and social organizations must remain long unchronicled in characteristic verse. In truth, the only real nationality of American literature is, I believe, to consist only in its superiority to every other; superiority not so much in the conventionalities of form and the polish of numbers, as in its grasp and subordination to morality. . . . It must sustain its dignity only in laying aright the basis of a literature of power and purity. I say in laying the basis, for we are not ready for the superstructure of elegant letters. . . . The pride and the strength of America—her people—can by no means yet in the mass appreciate the elegancies of letters. . . . Until, then, the mass of society shall have chastened their tastes . . . where can we look for the support of a native elegant literature? And it has been the failure of what constitutes the floating literary capital of our day that it has been established on no learning whatever and is of superficial and precocious growth. Classic learning must modify and should chastise American letters. It is a wise and a holy principle of our nature—that cheerful sufferance of the wisdom of the past which

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garners the treasures of its thought. Did we live in Homer's day we might attune our unlearned faculties to the habit of a sounding song; but like Virgil we must know somewhat before we tell the story of a Trojan wanderer, or rival his agricultural verse. And he who without learning, writes with mercenary views to supply the diseased appetites of myriads, beggars our growing literature. And we who have for years been professedly arraying ourselves in an Attic garb, let us not forsake the Blue-eyed Queen of letters to lay our offerings at the feet of the Ephesian Diana.

. . . [I]n its connection with literature, it is essential to the dignity of American learning that its efforts be subordinated to true morality. . . . When intellect becomes a pander to sensual appetite, the order of our system is subverted and man brutalizes every faculty of a nobler nature. Learning, so far from the maintenance of its true elevation, debases itself, and ignorance may triumph in the possession of nobler motives and higher hopes. In anticipating the progress of correct principle, and the subordination of our letters, as a ground of their excellence, to morality, a question arises of speculative curiosity no less than [of] real interest—whether an elegant literature can be so inwoven with morality as to make it no less charming to a refined intellect than to a pure heart? . . . And if this union between all that is pure in morals and all that is elegant in letters is ever to take place, where is the land and where the people who are to aid in the consummation before our own? . . . And what purpose in the world more noble, than that learning should seek a higher dignity by a more intimate alliance with morality, and the blessed union of both exalt our country and consummate the worth of our American character? . . .

But do not suppose that in my assertion of the dignity of learning, and its elevating pursuits, I overlook its bearings upon or connection with common mind. . . . The farmer has not fed us, the mechanic has not sheltered, in the expectancy of receiving nothing at our hands. And as we sever the bond of union to-day,

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it is this sentiment in furtherance of which I would utter my heartiest God speed you—live for your fellow-men. . . .

Permit me to urge upon you farther, in concluding, the benefit of carrying somewhat of the warmth of early feeling into the active duties of life. Let a young heart ever burn in your breasts; it cannot mislead a mature mind. . . .

Yale left upon Mr. Mitchell a strong impress. Knowing well both the strength and the weaknesses of his alma mater, he came to a right appraisal of both, and cherished an intelligent yet unwavering love for the institution. Readers of his *American Lands and Letters* cannot have failed to notice how frequently the name of Yale occurs therein; how often, in truth, the author goes out of his way to make mention of Yale. It is probably true that he was never entirely satisfied with Yale's achievement in literature. He revered her, to be sure, as a "steady old nurse<sup>1</sup> of sound letters;" nevertheless, he ventured to hope that she might come to put more of enthusiasm into her cherishment of the written word. An interesting pencil note dating from about 1897 must not be omitted here:

I have sometimes thought that Willis' falling away from stricter Presbyterianism and disappointing the expectations of those who had admired his Scripture pieces, had something to do with Yale's general, subsequent discredit of literature and of its study—I mean strictly belles-lettres study. Certain it is Yale has never put its foot-ball relish into letters or followers of letters! All that related to rhetoric or composition in my day was most shabbily pursued or methodized; nor, indeed, has Yale ever put its foot strongly in that direction. The President (Stiles) who wrote most perhaps, was credulous and sophomoric—not of a cast to kindle great warmth letterward! Dwight was more so, and

<sup>1</sup> *American Lands and Letters*, 1.199.

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under his influence we have Percival, Humphreys, Barlow, and Trumbull. Then came Jeremiah Day, who wrote the *Algebra* and *On the Will*, not either violently stimulative of poetry. Larned, who was Professor of Literature, was a *nemo*, caught out of a country pulpit and set there. Then came Woolsey: he indeed had literary ability and tastes; he made reforms. He set some wheels a-turning, and stimulated me more than any college man I remember toward belles-lettres. Porter followed: he had good appreciation, but strong faith in old Puritan ways of education—philosophy and metaphysics; Dr. Edwards was as his sun in the heavens. So the literary tendency at Yale had to go exploratively through metaphysic morasses before there came any emergence into blossom; and the consequence was—there was very little *blossoming*. Few people sat up nights in Porter's day to read poetry, or to write it.

There can be little doubt that among his teachers, Professor Woolsey left the deepest impress for good upon him, and that not alone in one way. Another of his random notes mentions the "overspill of youthful enthusiasms during revival days at Yale." On his own part, it seems that Donald had a natural "hesitancy about declaratory action—about the grand step of joining church." This hesitancy, he affirms, was "quickened by the calm utterance of that thoughtful, scholarly Christian, the late President Woolsey: 'Be sure of yourself. Don't engage for a life on the strength of a spasm of hopefulness and resolve.'" The calm thoughtfulness of Theodore Woolsey came to be a leading characteristic of Mr. Mitchell's own life.

It must have been with more of gloom than of joy that the young Bachelor of Arts left his college home. He had indeed brought to honorable completion a difficult task and had tasted the joy of achievement. His home circle, how-

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ever, had been sorely smitten, his sister Elizabeth was near death, and he himself alarmingly weak and ill. He returned to the farm-home of Mary Goddard at Elmgrove convinced that he had at most only a few years to live.



## IV

### ON THE FARM

You know that I had learned to use the sickle on our farmland in the valley, before I went away; and could bind up the ears at harvest with the stoutest of my men.—*Fresh Gleanings*, xvii.

There is no manner of work done upon a New England farm to which some day I have not put my hand—whether it be chopping wood, laying wall, sodding a coal-pit, cradling oats, weeding corn, shearing sheep, or sowing turnips.—*Out-of-Town Places*, 25.

In that central western part of New London County, Connecticut, which borders upon the county of Middlesex, lies the township of Salem. Within its confines are the farmlands which once belonged to the Shaw, Mumford, and Woodbridge families—hundreds of acres of the stony upland and meadow so characteristic of Connecticut. It is a beautiful region—now, as then, lying remote from the main currents of life, and keeping its secrets for those who can find, and understand, and enter into them. There flow lazy streams amid dreamful meadows and under the shadows of wooded hillsides; while on the eastern margin lie silent lakes.

The main features of its landscape have found fitting enshrinement in the pages of the *Reveries* and *Dream Life*, where Mr. Mitchell has written of the wild stream—large enough to make a river for English landscape—running through the valley of Elmgrove and winding between rich banks, where in summer-time the swallows build their nests and brood. Following his guidance, we may see the tall



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elms rising here and there along the margin, with their uplifted arms and leafy spray throwing great patches of shade upon the meadow, and the old lion-like oaks where the meadow soil hardens into rolling upland fastening to the ground with their ridgy roots, and with their gray, scraggy limbs making delicious shelter. There are banks which roll up swiftly into sloping hills covered with groves of oaks, and green pasturelands dotted with mossy oaks. There, too, is a wide swampwood which in the autumn-time is covered with a scarlet sheet blotched here and there by the dark crimson stains of the ash-tops.<sup>1</sup> Changed in some particulars since 1840, the township retains the essential features of those early days.

In the midst of this township and this valley, all within hailing distance of one another, are two ancestral homesteads and a modest country cottage. That one in the valley is Elmgrove, the old Mumford mansion, dating from about 1769-1770; that one just across the valley on a southern slope is the Woodbridge house, built in 1791-1792 as a home for the youthful Nathaniel Shaw Woodbridge and his newly wedded, equally youthful wife, Elizabeth Mumford. To the east, and just below the ridge on which stands the Woodbridge house, is the little cottage which, as the "quiet farm house" of the *Reveries*, is sure of enduring fame. When the final settlement of his mother's estate was made, Donald inherited the "quiet farm house" and about 400 acres of adjoining land.

It was to this remote and delightful region that he came after his graduation. His cousin, Mary Perkins, now the wife of Mr. Levi H. Goddard, was living in the Elmgrove house, and it was with her that he made his home. A tenant-

<sup>1</sup> See *Reveries*, 141-148; *Dream Life*, 111-117.

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farmer occupied the cottage and cultivated the inherited acres. Donald set himself at once to the general supervision of his farm and, as strength permitted and inclination directed, entered actively into all the agricultural labors. Agriculture at that period—especially in the remote districts of Connecticut—was in a primitive state, and farmers did not listen with approval to what they considered the new-fangled notions of book-farmers. The youthful proprietor had ample opportunity to study the effects of stolid ignorance and to catch inspiration for a betterment of conditions.<sup>1</sup>

The actual farm work he varied with hunting, fishing, reading, drawing, driving, and strolling. Twelve-mile drives across country to Norwich to market farm products combined business with pleasure. So far as possible he lived an open-air life, spending whole days under the shades of the loved trees, "inviting his soul," building dream-castles whose foundations were not yet seen of men. It was a dual life. On the one hand, it was giving the young graduate a direct experience of the land, teaching him the limitations and the possibilities—the advantages and the disadvantages—of farming. On the other, it was affording him a quiet season of growth. Away from the world, living a life of essential solitude, alone with books and his own thoughts, absorbing through every sense the beauties of earth and sky, he was silently growing the first-fruits of his soul and in quietude ripening them to the harvest.

It was at no time of his life a habit to keep an extended private diary. Now and then, however, for limited periods, he made a few entries; and there remains a note-book in which, under the head of "Jottings Down in the Country,"

<sup>1</sup> See the chapter, "An Old-Style Farm," in *Out-of-Town Places*, 3-26.

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he has written the record of four August days. Evidently tiring of the practice, he did not continue beyond the fourth entry. These jottings are delightfully illuminating. Here, in his own words, we may read the story of the half-idle, half-busy life he was leading. Here we may follow the delicious nothings, the whimsical reasonings, the occasions of merriment, the worth-while readings, the reflections on taste, which were filling his days:

*Aug. 26th, 1841.* This day pleasant. Practiced shooting in the morning. Afternoon strolled away with my gun, and brought back a robin and a fine, fat hen-partridge; which last I brought down from the wing, being the second bird I ever killed thus. Some compunctions about the cruelty of bird-killing, but find them marvellously absorbed in the pleasure of bringing down fine game at a good shooting distance. Query: How know we but it affords inferior animals delight to die? So strange a proposition I dare hardly write down without summing up the reflections that suggest it to my mind. 1st. Nothing in Nature leads us to suppose the negative of the proposition, but an analogy from our finely wrought constitutions to those of a humbler and infinitely less complicated structure. Farther, it is from an analogy between matter imbued with thinking properties: the residence of a soul, and mere animated matter. Again, the analogy is imperfect from the fact that it is between reasonable creatures, capable of qualifying pain to almost any degree by imagination, and creatures utterly destitute of this faculty. Again, how far pain pertains to our animal structure exclusively, rather than the amalgamation of body and mind, is a matter resting only upon the very feeble analogy of *apparent* suffering in brutes; and this apparent suffering is deduced from the violent throes and muscular contortions of animals when injured, of which throes and contortions, however, a dead body is susceptible under galvanic influences, and of that dead body pain cannot surely be predicated.

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2d. Supposing the analogy good, which, after all, but creates violent probability, is there not enough to combat that violent probability in the known justice and benevolence of the Deity, who in creating animals for much enjoyment should counter-balance their sum of enjoyment by a painfully agonizing death?

But supposing 3d, that the last hypothesis is feebly sustained, am I not at liberty to support the proposition asserted, in justification of my sporting propensity, by the fact that a gunshot wound, speedily terminating the existence of fowls, does afford pleasure, when compared with the throes of natural disease, the imbecility and consequent starvation of age, or yet the jaws of rapacious animals?

But again, and in disregard of the proposition unfolded under the foregoing remarks; even assuming that gaming does occasion intense suffering, though of course no more than the slaughter of domestic fowls, what then? Shall the infliction of pain prevent my consuming animal food? The question applies with equal force to the slaughter of beeves or other marketable products, and of wild game. Unless I am told the one is necessary, the other not. But where is this question of necessity to end? Forswear the catching of mackerel, and satisfy hunger with additional quantities of cod, or if [it is] not to be obtained, the flesh of the most ordinary market food; deny the appetite every delicacy of the sea and the air, and shrive it with the commoner products of nature: such must be the conclusion of those who contend against so called unnecessary cruelty.

But birds are of the beauties of nature, the orchestra of our planet, singing to the Power that made them. Such sentiments are sweet and holy poetry, but impartial reasoning lays them by, or with equal effect predicates the same delightful thoughts of the playful lamb frolicking on sun-painted hills, or silver-scaled fish leaping in the glad waters and ever making the sea to murmur a tribute of praise to the God that holds it in his hand.

So much for bird-killing. Yet to see the poor victim of a sports-

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man's aim, with its death wound, wheeling round and round in smaller and smaller circles, and fluttering and fluttering, then falling to gasp and die— Oh, it is sad; and it is sad to see the fair ones of earth's creation, be they soulless or immortal, failing with death's dart plunged to the quick—fainting and dying; and it is sad to see Time shooting down young hours and bright days and weeks, and they all dying; and it is sad to see one's budding years shot down. Ah, Time is a rare sportsman, and Death carries his game-bag!

Howbeit, my hen-partridge, under the good cookage of a Mistress of the Art, was pronounced a rare meal; and the poor robin, had he lived in Virgil's time, might be now tuning his seraph throat in Elysian fields. Tired with tramping, night came gratefully, as he always does in country homes, and gratefully I lay myself in his dark arms.

*Aug. 27th.* Rain—rain—rain—a fine day for trout; but my garments are hardly weather-proof, and my lines are all of the plain honest, brown-faced hemp which the perch nor the pike quarrel with, though they struggle hard with it; but the coy swimmer of the brook passes by. Silk, green as his own bright streams, and tiny as the tissue of his fin, entices most the king of the water-game.

Elmgrove was thrown into a state of wonder this morning by the announcement from the stable that Bess, the black sow, had borne into the world a litter of six black pigs, sleek and modest as their dam. Such events always by some strange association lead me into a train of sad reflections upon the emptiness of worldly hopes, and the vexatious cares which buffet us whichever way we turn. I gave them to the family at dinner in an anapestic ode. For a while they looked serious, almost alarmed; but when I smiled in concluding, it proved the spark for firing a magazine of hilarity, and though a good laughter myself, I was fairly put to the blush.

Noon and night both came round to-day with rain unabated, and if those sharp and heavy fires of Junius upon the poor Duke of

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Grafton hadn't waked me up as if I were on a fox track, I should have written this down in my journal, as I do sometimes, A Dull Day. I wonder what politicians of the day think of Junius? To my fancy there is not a book in the whole range of letters, unless it be some of Burke's marvellous production—"Letters on the Regicide Peace," or "To a Noble Lord"—which would so well fit a man to stand in that great hall upon the hill at Washington, and test with consummate art every device offered for the adoption of the nation. And not only would they qualify to test, but to denounce with bolts of argumentation that would not be withstood; or as the case might be, uphold with a giant grasp till the puny *athletæ* of the modern school of politics were wearied in their efforts to pull down.

We country people do sometimes wonder whether the legislators at the Capitol, save some few, are men tried in all the changeful aptitudes of government, and learned in its throng of concentric revolution; whether they have deeply studied the past and the present, and balance them daily on their votes; whether the great political reformers of every age have their place in their minds and shed their light on the paths of Republican experiment; whether they have ever digested in their own minds the great system of American law? ——— On such an inquiry, I could hardly sleep soundly, were it not for the music of incessant water-drops pattering on roof and window.

*Aug. 28th.* Rain still, fine, penetrating, grass-growing rain. It occurred to me to-day as I was looking over the wide, green meadow stretching down before the winds and the clouds, that no painter has ever attempted a portraiture of Nature in one of her gayest and liveliest frolics—a hard rain. And really it would be a noble triumph of art, to trickle the rain drops from the canvas foliage, and dimple the pool with the laughing eddies.<sup>1</sup> Farming on such a day is carried on with vigor by Nature, but with a slack

<sup>1</sup> Readers of Mr. Mitchell's works will recognize this as the germ of the passage, "A Picture of Rain," in *Wet Days at Edgewood*, 103.



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hand by man. Still, the ingenious and the diligent find much in a storm to be grateful for aside from the watering of earth's products. No properly educated farmer should be without his mechanic implements and his mechanical ability. And with these he will find a pleasure equal to any the work of his hands affords in examining his churn, his plow, his harrow, etc.; or, if like myself, he occasionally strolls off with his gun or his rod, the one is to be cleaned and oiled, the other to be set in order. Strange—strange—must be the pleasure of a closed-up city life—its avenues thronged with miserable debauchees, and its reality commuted for gain! When will man learn that in his thirst for wealth he forgets its object; when will the miserly farmer (for we have them) change meagerness for beauty; when will taste supplant niggardness; when will he believe that the cool of a rich shade is worth more to his soul than the paltry price which the sun-nurtured herbage adds to his store? When will he build up among these glens of old Connecticut, and on her oak-clad uplands, rich specimens of a taste refined by the study of Vitruvius; and when will a Cato teach, before the maxims of ancestral economy? Gaunt, cheerless piles of building of a two-story height proclaim its owner “forehanded,” when a day's study, and pleasant hours of relaxation over pages of British taste, would have placed in the forsaken grove of his “sheep-pasture” a cottage of rural beauty, amply large for his wants, and adorned with that simple elegance that proclaims its owner a man of soul! Dear to my heart are the thatched roofs of England's better days, the diamond window, the oaken wainscoting, the loops for the match-lock, the “varnished clock,” the “sanded floor,” the huge arm-chair; aye, even the gable ends and the stacks of stout chimneys of Dutch inheritance are far more sightly than the shameless concubinage of lumber and brick and plaster that hide the families of too many of our Connecticut husbandry. This is not poetry. I care not if these notions be subjected to the Procrustean bed of modern economy. Tell me, man of a one hundred, a two hundred, or five hundred acre farm, would

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it have cost you more to build in place of your mammoth house with its parlors and parlor chambers vacant and noiseless save the chirpings of some lost crickets, and the weekly visitings of your housewife, brushing in stockinged feet the dust from their lintels; would it have cost you more to have bestowed your earnings on a tasteful cottage ever gleeful from cellar to gable end with the sounds of domestic joy? In place of your carpetless and comfortless chambers to have made rich with bodily comforts and much food for the mind some little nook above the noisy nursery of the neatly shaded cottage? Away, away, say we who think

“the rocks and whispering trees  
Do still perform mysterious offices;”

away with that utilitarian spirit which overlooks the highest utility—the culture of man’s immortal part—which would by example rear children to a distaste for beauty and invest their growing minds in a garb meager as my neighbor’s smock frock, and stinted as the goose-fed herbage by his door.

Aug. 29th. Sunday is always more welcome in the country than elsewhere, and I dare not *anima mea in cognita* say entirely welcome; and why should this be so?

These jottings shall be supplemented by a brief paragraph from one of his magazine articles which dates from this same period:

The smaller fish . . . abound [in New England waters] and, together with the perch and pike, conspire to make agreeable an afternoon’s idlesse on the bosom of one of those fairy lakes which, though they be not christened with the romantic euphony of Lochs Tay, Craig, Ness, and Awe, possess equal charms within and around, and are scattered like pearl-drops all over the surface of New England. On an August day when every element was sleeping, the trees not breaking their picturesque line upon the sky by the faintest motion—the water placid—nothing stirring save



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the summer bird peeping and leaping by the shore, and the gauze-winged fly—

Τὸν λάλον ἃ λαλόεσσα, τὸν εὐπτερον ἃ πτερόεσσα,  
Τὸν ξένον ἃ ξείνα, τὸν θερινὸν θερινά<sup>1</sup> —

on such a morning, ere yet it was fairly broke into the sky, have we paddled a rolling canoe into the center of one of these same fairy water-spots and angled the live-long day with no companions but the tall hills climbing round and the old gray tree trunks stretching through their dark and heavy foliage, and we wished no better. Though nothing save the minnow and roach played about our hook till night, yet we found it withal “a rest to the mind, a cheerer of spirits, a diverter of sadness, a calmer of unquiet thoughts, a moderator of passions, a procurer of contentedness.”<sup>2</sup>

All the while he was diligently following his literary pursuits, and his studies of the practical and æsthetic branches of agriculture. Between June 1842 and January 1844, he contributed a total of sixty-one pages to the *Knickerbocker Magazine*, the *North American Review*, and the *New Englander*. The current magazines and the new books found their way to his country residence. It was in the summer of 1843 that he secured the recently issued American edition of *Sketches by Boz*, the first of Dickens's works to come into his hands. He kept in close touch with the valuable writings of A. J. Downing, a pioneer advocate of landscape-gardening and rural architecture in America. On the 5th of September 1842, he began an “Index of Agriculture: being notes from best authorities on the improvement of soils, crops, and cat-

<sup>1</sup> This passage from Evenus (*Anthologiæ Palatinæ*, 9.122), always a favorite with Mr. Mitchell, he rendered thus (about 1840):

Fellow prattlers, winged both, both visitants together,  
The summer bird, the summer fly, both fond of summer weather.

<sup>2</sup> *North American Review* (October 1842), 370-371.

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tle, together with general information useful to the landholder," placing upon its title-page an echo of his recent classical studies, adapted to suit his own humor:

Quid faciat laetas segetes, quo sidere terram  
Vertere . . .  
Conveniat, quæ cura boum, qui cultus habendo  
Sit pecori, *atquæ porcis* quanta experientia parcis,  
Hinc *discere* incipiam. . . .<sup>1</sup>

In 1843 the New York State Agricultural Society awarded him a silver medal for prize plans of farm-buildings. This first trophy of his agricultural studies and his self-taught draftsmanship he cherished with peculiar affection, regarding it with much more satisfaction and pleasure than he regarded later and larger achievement.

Meanwhile, in a manner which he himself did not perhaps entirely understand, the spell of the countryside was growing upon him. His natural shyness was deepening, his love of solitude was changing him into something of a recluse. A seeming inertia was holding him. All this the keen eye of Gen. Williams saw. Without consulting his ward, the businesslike guardian entered into negotiations with Mr. Joel W. White, newly appointed consul to Liverpool, and secured for Donald a secretaryship in the consular office. With characteristic abruptness, the matter was broached. "Donald," said Gen. Williams, "I have been observing you carefully the last few months, and I regret to say that you are becoming too fond of your isolated life. You are stag-

<sup>1</sup> Virgil, *Georgic*, I.I-5; as rendered by Arthur S. Way:

What maketh the harvest's golden laughter, what star-clusters guide  
The yeoman for turning the furrow, for wedding the elm to his bride,  
All rearing of cattle, all tending of flocks, all mysteries  
By old experience taught of the treasure-hoarding bees—  
These shall be theme of my song.

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nating. You are wasting your abilities on that inland farm. I have secured for you a position with Mr. White, our consul to Liverpool, and have engaged your passage to England. You are to go to-morrow to Norwich to begin arrangements for your journey."

Just what Donald replied is not known, but we do have his own later account of the decision made. Just as he was dreaming of how the old farm might be stirred into new life, "there came," he wrote, "a flattering invitation to change the scene of labor and of observation, a single night only being given for decision. I remember the night as if only this morning's sun broke it, and kindled it into day. One way, the brooks, the oaks, the crops, the memories, the homely hopes lured me; the other way I saw splendid and enticing phantasmagoria—London Bridge, St. Paul's, Prince Hal, Fleet Street, Bolt Court, Kenilworth, wild ruins. Next morning I gave the key of the corn-crib to the foreman and bade the farm-land adieu."<sup>1</sup>

In after years Mr. Mitchell used to tell his children that had it not been for Gen. Williams he might have settled down to a quiet life of farming and his whole career have been quite other than it was. He was always grateful that his old guardian had pricked him into action. With the exception of two long drives—one to Hartford, Connecticut, the other to Putney, Vermont—he had during three years scarcely stirred beyond the near limits of his Salem farm. He was now sufficiently strong to travel without discomfort. On the 16th day of October 1844, he sailed from Boston on the steamship *Caledonia* for Liverpool.

<sup>1</sup> *Out-of-Town Places*, 24-25.

## V

### EUROPE

———Yet is it useless—altogether useless—the effort to make words paint the passions that blaze in a man's heart as he wanders for the first time over the glorious old highways of Europe!—*Fresh Gleanings*, xvii.

A man does not know England, or English landscape, or English country feeling, until he has broken away from railways, from cities, from towns, and clambered over stiles and lost himself in the fields.—*My Farm of Edgewood*, 317.

On the 3d of October 1844, in company with the ever-faithful Mary Goddard, Donald was driving along the old Essex turnpike on his way to Norwich to complete arrangements for his sailing. The two cousins talked much of this sudden change in his quiet life, and speculated after the fashion of young people on what the future might hold in store. As he passed along the quiet country road on that golden October morning his mind was busy with memories which even the anticipations of foreign travel could not entirely suppress. He must have recalled that other morning fourteen years before when he and his father were journeying to the Ellington school, and there must have come a train of sad reflections upon that "inscrutable Providence" which had wrought such changes in the family circle since then. At the very beginning of his Salem residence Elizabeth had died at the age of seventeen. Lucretia, his only remaining sister, married now and living in West Springfield, Massachusetts, was failing in health, and awaiting with quiet dig-

nity the death which she and her friends believed to be near and certain. The two brothers—Louis, eighteen, and Alfred, twelve years old—under the guardianship of Gen. Williams were continuing their school work and gathering some little fund of business knowledge. So far as family affairs were concerned, Donald felt free to go. Undoubtedly there came to him some vague thoughts that henceforward his life would be different; it is not likely that he realized how complete was to be the break with the old days, how enlarging the experiences which awaited him.

In the early forties a trip to Europe was not the customary and easy thing that it is to-day. For the great majority of Americans the "Old Country" was still a far-away region, sufficiently unknown to be a land of interest and wonder, from which travel letters were eagerly read. Donald was among the pioneers of those young Americans who, fired by the descriptions of Washington Irving, enthusiastically followed the trails of adventure and romance which Europe then offered. It is interesting to remember that only three months before, on July 1st, 1844, Bayard Taylor had sailed on the packet-ship *Oxford* for Liverpool to begin his European wanderings, and that he returned to America on the 1st of June 1846, three months before Donald. The paths of the two travellers often crossed, and in 1846, immediately upon its publication, Donald bought the two paper-bound volumes of the first edition of Taylor's *Views A-foot*; but it was not until several years later at the Century Club in New York City that they met and became warm friends.

Most of the frequent and long letters which Donald wrote to Gen. Williams and Mary Goddard have been preserved. In addition there are the five little note-books, or travel diaries, by means of which we are enabled to follow every

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step of his journeying. Much of this chapter, therefore, will be in the traveller's own words:

We are at length in England [runs his first letter from Liverpool to Gen. Williams under date of 30th October 1844]. For the passage has been a long one—long for me, longer for Mr. White who has been sick nearly the whole passage. I had no positive sickness; but suffered from tedium, from damp, from our uneasy motion, from a thousand offensive smells and sights, and the general dullness which seemed to pervade the whole ship's company. At Halifax we were all in good spirits, having enjoyed the novelty without serious appreciation of the discomforts. But the relapse came even before the fair winds which pushed us along at the rate of 250 miles a day had wholly changed their course. All the happy plans laid out for occupation, were unfortunately remembered only as we remember the ghost-stories of childhood. There was too much striving to keep one's body upright and stomach sound and heart awake and head from being dizzy to even think of the energy of serious endeavor. Indeed, I may set the fortnight of sail down as the longest in a long course of years. The closeness, the damp, the strange motion, the hurry, the jostling, and all need a practical sort of philosophy which I have not yet.

The beautiful sunrises, moreover, that my new habits were to cause me to witness, were always covered up in mist and clouds as thick as the blankets and berth-curtains that at the same time covered me. We had three or four very hard blows from the southwest, such as would be called ashore, hurricanes. After this, winds prevailed from southeast, giving us a rough and cold and wet reception off Cape Clear. We passed Bantra Bay Monday forenoon, and were off Holyhead Tuesday night at 10; took a pilot at 11; were anchored in the Mersey at 4. . . .

. . . We are thus early established in winter quarters at the Clayton Arms Hotel, Clayton Square, where we have a snug parlor handsomely furnished . . . beside two bedrooms. . . . These all,



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with meals served at any hour and free attendance of servants for—I don't violate confidence in this—£3. 10s.; each per week equal to \$6.60. Mr. White empowered me to treat for this bargain with our very pretty landlady below—her terms having been named at two guineas each. Of course I represented in as fair terms as possible the advantages resulting from the patronage of the Consul, &c., &c., and succeeded in making present arrangement. The office is fifteen minutes' walk from this and the great thoroughfares, only a stone's throw off. So we have the advantage of nearness to business, without its noise. . . .

On the following day he wrote a long letter to Mary Goddard:

Well, here I am, Mary, in Mrs. Tribes' Clayton Arms Hotel, Clayton Square, Liverpool; in a second-floor parlor with Liverpool coal burning cheerfully as is its wont, Mr. White at the same table writing his wife. We have taken quarters for the winter, having this snug parlor with sofa, mahogany chairs, center table, damask and muslin curtains, Brussels carpet, windows opening to the floor, and folding doors to throw us open a suite of rooms on occasion of future entertainments to be given our American captains. Beside this, two bedrooms, No. 1 for myself two doors off on same floor, with tall curtained bed . . . and Mr. White's farther on along the gas-lighted corridor. The house is not a large one, nor one of great note; but retired, reputable, and near the Consulate office. Our meals are served to order at whatever hour, in whatever style, and as luxuriantly as directed. All the hotels are of this sort. No *table d'hôte*. Thus, to-night at tea appeared an elegant loaf of bread, a tea-tray, silver tea-pot, &c., two glass cups, one of black, the other of green tea (dry), a hot tea-kettle on the grate, hot tea-cakes, butter, &c., and a gentlemanly fellow to wait our bidding. At dinner comes up a tureen of soup; that removed, there appears a dish of fish and potatoes; next a piece of roast beef or other meat; then pie or pudding; then celery and done. I forget



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the beautiful English cheese—don't talk of Salem or Pomfret cheeses—this Cheshire one is as yellow as gold, as big as a table, as sweet as honey, as rich as butter, as fresh as ice, and as luscious as a peach.

But I am beginning at the end. Didn't you ever suspect that I was going out in some sort of companionship with Mr. White, after all the little coincidences which I supposed would have been as strong as proofs of holy writ? And do you rashly condemn my want of confidence for not making fuller disclosures? I was not allowed to do so—it was better so for Mr. White and better for me—to escape sundry banterings which very likely might have been thrust on me at home. Still I trust I should have had too much good sense to suffer a mere political propriety to stand in the way of a chance for improvement which might perhaps never again occur.

I do not regret the determination. I find Mr. White kind and obliging—not as much polish as I would wish—but great plainness and honesty—and great practical force of character.

But of the voyage. . . . For first four or five days had pleasant weather; that is to say, a fair wind but no sun or clear sky—indeed I have not seen the sun for an hour together since leaving Boston dock! After the four, had four or five severe, very severe gales from southwest. An old navy officer on board pronounced them the hardest gales he had ever experienced. You can form no conception of the force of a blow at sea; the steamer rolled to leeward so as to forbid all standing upon deck or anywhere else and the spray covered the vessel, while the whole sea was as white as the ground after a day's snow. Indeed, it reminded me of a December snow-storm, when the wind is strong enough to take one's skin off and cold enough to shrivel it up and the whole air thick with cutting atoms and the whole ground restless and all over white. After the gales, was adverse weather, the old ship pitching and plunging and rolling like—throw an egg-shell into the next pot of beef you boil, and you will see how—imagine yourself in the egg-

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shell, and you will *feel* how! Great waves tumbling—as would seem upon you, then passing like an ocean of oil under—and heaving you up from the seething pool that growls and blackens and whirls with an awful strength and depth behind. . . . I was not *sick* at all—I lost two dinners—the last on board, owing to nausea excited by so much cooking under my nostrils. Aside from this was well, though out every day in wet and spray, and walking wet decks in thin boots—and more than all, sleeping in a berth with the water oozing upon me drop by drop through deck of vessel in the storms off the coast. . . .

I shall go down to London, over to Manchester, and all about soon. First I mean to acquaint myself with duties devolving on me. Shall also this winter attend lectures from scientific men two evenings in the week and take lessons in sketching, architectural drawing, and French. Office hours at Consulate are from 10 to 4 P. M. . . .

I shall keep no copies of letters, so that any possible future use would depend on preservation of copy.

Mr. White had received his appointment to the Liverpool consulate from President Tyler, whose administration was nearing its end. Even before reaching Liverpool, therefore, Donald's chief was confronted with the prospect of a change of national administration at the November election, and a consequent uncertainty of consular tenure. Upon reaching the scene of their labors they were met with vexatious delays in preparing to take over the affairs of an office that had evidently been none too well managed. Donald's letters are full of details:

(*To Gen. Williams. LIVERPOOL, Nov. 14th, 1844.*)— . . . Mr. White is absent in London. His *exequatur* (permit from Foreign Office) had not arrived up to Tuesday night, and the Queen having taken a trip to Northampton accompanied by the Foreign Minister

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(Lord Aberdeen), Mr. White grew somewhat impatient and under advice of the present incumbent of the office, Mr. Davy, the Consul for Leeds, he left for London on Wednesday morning. My stay here during his absence is not at all contrary to my wishes, the weather being exceedingly dull and a trip during session of Parliament having more interest. Moreover, Mr. W. evidently felt a little sorely at the continued expenses and the delayed prospect of any return, which would have made it embarrassing to me. His *exequatur* arrived safely this morning, he, as in case of his commission, passing it on the road. . . .

The office of the American Consulate is, I think I wrote in my last, in a very dismal part of the town, and itself a dingy, dirty place. And, if Mr. Polk is elected (at the time I write he either is or is not), I shall not cease importuning Mr. W. to consult private comfort and the reputation of the country in a speedy removal. But there's the rub! Is Mr. P. elected? At this very moment— $\frac{1}{2}$  past 11, night ( $\frac{1}{2}$  past 6 with you)—I fancy you looking over the returns . . . and settling with yourself the question of Mr. W's return or no.

The affairs of the office are in most lamentable condition. There has been apparently for last year or two no order, no system, no neatness—nothing. I ask for Mr. Maury's correspondence and nothing is known of it; for Mr. Haggarty's and it is not there; for Mr. Ogden's and a parcel of books with entries in either end, topsy-turvy, are shown, which far enough from being models are quite the contrary. The same is true of every record of the office. Besides Mr. Davy there are connected with the office a Mr. Pearce, who has held his situation over twenty years as Vice Consul; a Mr. Welding, a sort of general clerk; and a boy for fire-making and errands. The office, as I said, is small . . . the front windows looking out upon the grave-yard of St. Nicholas' Church, from whence, in the opening of a grave, there must of course arise a most disagreeable effluvia. . . .

3 o'clock, Friday. I have just returned from listening to the

most extraordinary man I ever met with—Mr. Hughes, the Charge at The Hague. He called at the Consulate office in hope of seeing Mr. White, who has not yet returned from London. He seems to know everyone and be known of everyone, telling me I ought to be ashamed of myself for not having heard of him. His talk, an incessant stream of adventure in which himself was the hero, but with so good a grace that one could not impute conceit. I surely never laughed louder or longer. Of Mr. White he says, "How long has he been here?" "Nearly a fortnight." "What has he been doing?" "Nothing." "The very worst thing he could do. Tell him, the first day after his return to call upon the Mayor, the President of the Chamber of Commerce, &c., &c., or they will set him down for a gawky Yankee who is not half humanized. In fact," said he, "though I have been but six hours in the place I have heard hints already of dissatisfaction with his course."

Between ourselves, the hints were well founded. And Mr. W. is better fitted for the business than for the etiquette of the station. This fact more than any other makes it difficult for me to put off my usual backwardness; am always resolving and never acting. And am sometimes inclined to believe that ease of social and worldly intercourse is inbred and that my lack of it cannot be supplied. Such an idea has always forwarded my disposition to live upon a farm. . . .

16 Nov. 1844. Mr. W. entered upon the discharge of duties to-day, having returned this morning. I commenced work by writing some sixteen letters to neighboring consuls. . . .

(*To Mrs. Goddard.* LIVERPOOL, Nov. 15th, 1844.)— . . . At noon I saw a . . . Mr. Hughes, our Charge des Affairs at The Hague—certainly the most extraordinary individual it has ever been my fortune to meet. His conversation was one torrent of wit, of anecdote, of adventure. His manner all impudence, carelessness, and drollery. For three hours he held Mr. Davy (the acting Consul) and myself in a roar of laughter, or sober as judges. "Do you know me?" were his first words to me; "what, not know

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me?—then you ought to be ashamed of yourself.” “Mind,” said he, when he left, “don’t tell your friends in America anything about me. I don’t want to be known there. . . .”

And how do I and how have I spent my time, you ask, while Mr. W. has been awaiting his authority from the Queen, who at her own will is gadding all over the country. Well, I have been to the ancient city of Chester. Do you remember about the stout old constable of Chester and his nephew Damian? If not, read over next rainy day *The Betrothed* again. . . . Then I have been to Woolton, to Wavertree (see *Cultivator*), to Aigburth, &c., &c. Visits I have not made—I shall never make a visitor. . . . It were perhaps as well not to speak much of my connection with Mr. W., as it is uncertain how long he continues, or how long I shall be with him. I shall not come home without seeing much of England, I assure you.

(*To Mrs. Goddard. LIVERPOOL, Nov. 29th, 1844.*)— . . . Saturday evening last I dined with Mr. Gair of the first mercantile house in Liverpool (partner of the Barings). Met there some half-dozen of American captains, &c.; enjoyed myself therein not much, nor suffered at all. I shall be driven yet to talk, spite of myself; which reminds me of Uncle Henry [Perkins], to whom give my kindest remembrances. It is pleasant in this strange land to bear in mind the recollection of so generous a heart as his and one among the very few which I should, under any changes, count on as friendly to me. I hope he will bear up under the unlooked for and unhopd for success of Polk. It was a serious surprise this side, as well as the other. Mr. White, I think, little expected such a result. “It is an ill wind that blows nobody any good.” I suppose Mr. White will continue here and the opportunity given me of remaining if I choose. This is, however, yet *in futuro*. One thing certainly—you need not look for me *before* next autumn.

(*To Gen. Williams. LIVERPOOL, Nov. 30th, 1844.*)— . . . Yesterday by the *Hibernia* was received . . . confirmation of the

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election of Mr. Polk of which we had earlier intelligence by the *Great Western*. It is matter of some surprise here, even of disappointment (not, however, with Mr. White). State bond holders are much chagrined at the result, and the ministerial organs are speaking very contemptuously of Mr. P., looking upon his election as further proof of the spread of ultra democratic principles. Nor are importers so sanguine of easier admission of their goods as would have been supposed. . . . I suppose there can be no doubt of the confirmation of Mr. White.

I am so far pleased with everything connected with my new duties, which are really very trifling. The opportunities for acquiring information having any connection with business are at every hand. I only fear that their commonness may suggest neglect. . . .

Almost immediately the rural regions of England, so greatly in contrast with the baldness of what he had been accustomed to in America, began to take hold upon him. His letters to the *Cultivator*, of Albany, New York, bear witness to the strength of his feeling. "I am assured," he wrote from Liverpool, January 4th, 1845, "that the farm houses of Lancashire compare unfavorably with those of almost any county in England. Still there is a soberness, a quietness, a tastefulness, a rurality, and a home-look about nearly all I have seen, which once grafted upon the country houses in America, will go far toward making our landscape equal to English in beauty."<sup>1</sup> He was quick to see, also, that the charm was a result of the beauty-loving spirit which had been inbred and had become a second nature to the British; that it was not dependent upon means or leisure. After watching a threshing scene in mid-England, he sent a message to the husbandmen of America. "Before I left," he

<sup>1</sup> The *Cultivator* (April 1845), 120.



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wrote, "the threshers suspended labor for dinner; and what was it? Half a barley loaf and a bit of cheese!—this eaten squat upon the straw and moistened with a jug of water and cut in pieces with their pocket clasp-knives. This is no joke; it was their *dinner*; and yet a stone's throw away lay the three hundred acre park for old oaks to fatten on, and herds of deer to dance over, and scores of hares to trip about, and breed, and die upon. Let our farmers and farm laborers thank heaven that they are not set down within the range of such odious contrasts. And yet, and it is a shame to every man in America who has a spot of land and a soul—these same laborers, dining on barley bread, will save enough of time and of means to put out the sweet brier at their cottage window, to train the ivy up their chimney side, and to keep the grass green and velvety at their door. What for? Do you say what for? '*Out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight.*'"<sup>1</sup>

Donald's connection with the consulate was of short duration. The fogs and damps of Liverpool aggravated his already weak lungs to such an extent that he was compelled to seek a milder climate. He communicated his plans and uncertainties to Gen. Williams in a letter dated December 24th, 1844:

The contents of this will surprise you, but I hope not disturb you. You will probably have received before this, by ship, a letter addressed to Louis and Alfred, advising you of my having taken cold and finding it difficult to rid myself of a cough contracted by it. The cough has continued and is upon me now, but attended by no unfavorable symptom beside. I find that nearly every third man here is troubled in the same way; still, considering my disposition

<sup>1</sup> The *Cultivator* (May 1845), 139. Written from St. Hiliers, Island of Jersey, February 1st, 1845.



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to weakness in that quarter, and after having consulted a physician here, I think it altogether advisable to make a change of climate—the physician assuring me that a few days' sail to the south, by taking me out of the region of these everlasting fogs and smoke, would entirely relieve me. Observe, I have no weakness in any way—am as strong—as active—with as good an appetite as ever; but fear that irritation of a tender organ for a long time will derange it.

My next quandary has been which way to turn myself. Mr. White, not having news of his confirmation, was unwilling to leave his post and as uncertain as myself which would be my better course of procedure. Once I thought of taking ship for New Orleans, to which port many vessels are sailing weekly with delightful weather, following the trade winds. The expense would be £20 passage each way and expenses there; but my great objection was that I should from the length of the passage lose the entire winter, whereas by taking a route to the Mediterranean I should have the same advantage of sea-air united with opportunity for observation. . . . I have tried to imagine what would be your advice under the circumstances and much regret that I cannot wait to receive it. In way of expenses it will of course be an unexpected revulsion. . . .

. . . The weather here has been very cold, and though the mercury has not ranged so low as with us, yet I find the air much more penetrating. The great trouble, however, is in the thickness and the smoke. I am even sometimes disposed to think that to be rid of them would be to rid myself of lung trouble; still, prefer the safer way of breathing a while in a warmer as well as a purer atmosphere.

Another subject I must not omit to mention to you which will doubtless no less surprise you, though differently. Shortly after reaching Liverpool, upon looking over the list of U. S. Consuls in the various ports on the Continent, Mr. White asked me in a half joking way how I should like such and such consulates; to which I replied in as joking a way. . . . Since that time and especially

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since my cough has offered to drive me away, Mr. W. has frequently renewed the subject. . . . I am much puzzled as to what is proper action under the circumstances. With regard to aptitude for the business, if none other should occur than such as has come before this Consulate during our stay thus far, I should feel confidence in myself for its proper transaction. Still I should be sensible that my age might well excite demurral. . . . The duties here have, it is true, been very light; for my part, much lighter than I could have desired. So far as my own improvement is concerned, I know not what to think of the proposal; indeed, it would depend very much on the port where might be the offered Consulate. I have no doubt but under such responsibility as would necessarily attach to such appointment, I could act to more advantage than where no responsibility attached. Somebody has remarked that many a soldier would make as great a general as Washington, if placed in the same circumstances. High responsibility calls out all a man's resources and I have reached that time of life when my resources ought to begin to develop—such as decision, promptness, prudence, application of knowledge, adaptation of action to circumstance, &c., &c., all of which qualities can have but limited exercise in any position not *primary*. Still, I should choose to feel more confidence in the result of my actions than now, and therefore should prefer returning to spend the summer months with Mr. W., and if well enough the next winter—of which, indeed, I have no fears—after which, if there could be found a berth with no better claimant in some good port along the Mediterranean, or even in England—out of this smoke and fog—which would pay my way fairly, I see no good reason now for not taking such an one. I suppose, however, Mr. W. does not hope for so much influence with the incoming President as with Mr. Tyler. He is confident of effecting the nomination by present incumbent. I hope you will not fail to give me your views on this subject by the return steamer. . . .

*Jan. 1.* To-morrow begins the New Year and to-morrow I shall

start for Guernsey hoping a month's run upon the islands in its neighborhood will restore me fully. I have rid myself of my cough, but wish a little extra strength to ward off all cold and wet to come. After my return I shall either take fencing lessons, or as you advise, horse-exercise. . . .

On the 3d of January 1845, Donald began his journey southward from Liverpool. However much he disliked its smoke and fog, when the time for departure came he left the gray city with a pang of regret. The state of his feelings may be gathered from a letter which he wrote to Mrs. Goddard on the evening of New Year's Day. "In remembrance of your frequent kindnesses to me the past year," runs the letter, "I cannot forbear wishing you this first day, a happy new one. Happier than I anticipate myself—perhaps I feel unduly despondent—but a little ill-health and this continued, dreadful, foggy weather does draw down one's spirits wonderfully. No snow yet, but wet and chills and always smoke—and no sun. I leave it to-morrow; this again causes disquietude—to leave the only acquaintance this side and pass a month or two or more upon the bits of islands which lie off the coast of France . . . with only such communication with my little world as these letters afford, is a little saddening. My present intentions are to pass sufficient time among the islands to see them wholly; then to come on to the coast of Devon, and weather and health and spirits permitting, to buy me there a little pony and to saunter up to this county again—partly riding, partly walking—seeing all my eyes and impudence will admit of. This looks very pleasantly on paper, but not so richly appear my views of the actuality; viz., possible sickness, no friend to care for me, or hardly hear of me. . . ."

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Such were the general plans with which he set forth. Doubtless at the time he could scarcely have analyzed his own feelings and motives with entire accuracy. He had been away from America just long enough to feel the full strength of homesickness; the duties at the consulate were not sufficient, or of such nature, as to absorb his attention; and in consequence he had developed a restlessness that could be satisfied only by action. The spirit of adventure was upon him; the green fields and historic shrines of Britain were calling to him. Without knowing it, he was adopting just the proper course for one of his temperament and state of health; he was to feed his mind and spirit by the wayside and to restore his broken health in the soft open air of outdoor England.

He was well equipped for the journey. He was widely read in English history and literature, topography was with him a hobby, and he carried as keen a pair of Yankee eyes as ever looked upon Europe. He had, too, the spirit of the true traveller, and in this antedated Robert Louis Stevenson by many years. The light through which he observed was not the ordinary light of every day; it was a light colored by the passion and romance of his own nature. Where others saw only things, he saw things lighted up by memories, emotions, and hopes. Nor should we fail to remember that despite the sorrows through which he had passed, he was essentially a young man of buoyant spirit with a hearty sense of humor. The reader will carry away a wrong conception if he does not grasp at once the fact that throughout life Mr. Mitchell was in great degree a humorist. He missed no bit of fun. His bright eyes twinkled with merriment and on occasion there were few heartier laughers. This play of light fancy against the strong background of his predomi-

nating mood of deep sentiment and pensive reverie must be kept clearly in mind. It is a key to the understanding of his nature.

Leisurely by rail and coach he proceeded southward through Birmingham, Worcester, Gloucester, Bristol, and Exeter to Plymouth. In each place he remained long enough to see the objects of immediate interest. He knew how to depend upon himself, and his knowledge and travel sense enabled him to do so. "Of general guide-books which cover the whole ground, none stands pre-eminent," he wrote a few months later. "Nothing is better than a map and a thorough knowledge of English history. These two together will open sights to a man with eyes, at which he cannot tire of looking, and which he will never forget. And he who is not familiar with the great epochs of English history and the localities of their evolutions will spend a few days economically in a garret of London or Liverpool, sweating with Turner or Hume."<sup>1</sup> On the 4th of January he attended services in Gloucester cathedral and afterward spent an hour rambling through it and observing it critically. "No cathedral architecture in England," he observed later, "so impressed me by the wealth and variety of sharp-wrought details. There is a bold offence against conventionalities in treatment, which is admirable." The beauties of Devonshire entranced him and at the little inn of Erme-bridge in the vicinity of Ermington<sup>2</sup> he remained

<sup>1</sup> "Notes by the Road," No. 1. *American Review* (February 1846), 158.

<sup>2</sup> "How I wish you could have stopped on your way through Devonshire at Erme-bridge near to Modbury, a beautiful region where I passed a fortnight at a country inn in January 1845 luxuriating in wood walks, and in gooseberry tart with clotted cream, with great banks of splendid laurestina and Spanish laurels piling up in heaps under my window. There is no such *country* anywhere as in England, and nowhere a people who so comprehend all that can and ought to be made of it."—D. G. M. in letter to his daughter Elizabeth, December 29th, 1882. Mr. Mitchell's memory did not serve him accurately as to the length of his stay.

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for a week, enjoying country walks, exploring the nooks and crannies of the neighborhood, talking with the countrymen, and witnessing the preparations of a troop of scarlet-coated, top-booted fox-hunters. Here, too, his note-book tells us, he met and conversed with an original of Sam Weller, Sr., upon questions of education, government, and religion! Erme-bridge lives in the pages of his first book, as do many of the other places visited by him during this first period abroad.<sup>1</sup> He gave eleven days to this stage of his journey, arriving in Plymouth the evening of January 13th.

It had been Donald's original intention to take passage in a Torquay steamer for Jersey; indeed, the booking-agent at Exeter had assured him he would be in time for the sailing. Once in Torquay, however, he found that no steamer ran in the winter months, nor was there any short of Southampton. Lacking funds sufficient to carry him to Southampton, he had turned from the thoroughfares and with the sweet freedom of the road upon him, "traveled hopefully" and leisurely to Plymouth. Here he engaged passage for Jersey in the *Zebra*, "a little, black, one-masted vessel"—known and loved by every admirer of Mr. Mitchell—which owes its immortality to Donald's description of its perilous sail across the English Channel.<sup>2</sup>

"On Monday, the 13th," he wrote to Gen. Williams, "I went down to Plymouth and after looking about it—specially at its wonderful breakwater—set sail in a little, one-masted cutter for Jersey. Left harbor on Tuesday at 5 P. M., and reached Jersey on Friday, at 1 P. M.! Usual passage is twenty-eight hours. I need not tell you we had exceeding rough weather—not so good accommodations as in a New

<sup>1</sup> *Fresh Gleanings*, 8-11, and *passim* for the two years of travel.

<sup>2</sup> Every one should read this description in *Fresh Gleanings*, 14-24. It is one of Mr. Mitchell's most spirited narratives.



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London fishing smack. . . . All crowded in one dirty cabin where the sailors' messes were cooked and no vent for the smoke. You are surprised that I did not throw myself overboard—doubtless; but I had not strength to do so, so exceeding sick was I (it must be confessed). The Atlantic, and Atlantic steamers are nothing to a swell in the English Channel on board a cutter of forty tons. I feel myself a sailor now. But it is over, and has done me good. My cough has left me and has left me in doubt whether to return and try again northern air, or spend the winter out here. Prudence dictates the latter course." Mr. Mitchell used to say laughingly that from the day he set foot on Jersey soil his lung-trouble vanished; that all seeds of disease had gone overboard into the raging channel! It is certain that henceforward his health improved; and, although he never became a man of robust health, he was active, energetic, and very tenacious of life.

The day after his arrival he found lodging at La Solitude, a cottage down a little by-way from the high road to St. Savior's. "The very first time," he wrote, "that I swung open the green gate that opens on the by-way and brushed through the laurel bushes and read the name modestly written over the door and under the arbor that was flaunting in the dead of winter with rich green ivy leaves, my heart yearned toward it as toward a home."<sup>1</sup> A week later, with memories of Elmgrove racing through his mind, he sat in his room writing to Mary Goddard:

(*January 24th, 1845.*)— . . . Yours of the 22d [December 1844] is by me, and with it comes so strongly revival of old times—the busy importance of Alf; the noisy laugh issuing from under

<sup>1</sup> *Fresh Gleanings*, 43.



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that little sunbonnet; the pattering feet of Henry; the wagging tail and earnest, imploring look of Carlo—that I must needs say “How d’ye do” to each several one of them again, not excepting yourself and husband.

Can you realize, any one of you, that 4,000 miles of green and blue—then green again—rock, and turbulent ocean is swelling between that old Mumford house with its porch and long back-chimney—and I daresay snow-covered roof—and this little, snug, Norman cottage where I am lolling before a grate full of coals and watching the sun streaming brightly down into my neighbor’s garden upon box-border and gravel walks; and rich looking cauliflowers thrusting out their white powdered heads fearlessly into the January air; and fir trees and bunches of American laurel; and beyond it a bold, bald cliff where a dozen quarrymen are hammering upon its sides—or looking from the other window down upon the roofs and spires and peaks and chimneys of the little city of St. Hiliers; and beyond it, and casting a broad, black shadow over its further half, the mammoth pile of rock upon which stand out distinctly the bastions and curtains of Fort Regent, from which every morning at sunrise a gun booms over the town, and upon whose highest point—half-way up its tall flag-staff—the signal ball is even now flying which says, “*Mail for England closes to-night.*” Say—can you realize it? It is even so. There are playful fellows in the streets of a certain height, but all Philippes or Louis—and jabber a most barbarous language—and there are Carlos; but they answer to the French of “Come here.” . . . My health is much better—cough entirely left me. . . .

A month later and he was writing again to Mary, his thoughts of Elmgrove still glowing, his tastes quickened by the scenes amidst which he was living, and his hopes brightening toward some vague future. “I have seen many hundred *rustic seats* in England,” he wrote (February 27th, 1845), “but none superior to yours (upon honor). You will [eas]ily

conceive that I do not look over beautiful places and pretty places with my eyes shut, or without accumulating hints which, if God spares my life and health, may some day be illustrated in making richer some nook of American landscape." And then, with reference to some praise which had been pronounced upon one of the letters which he had contributed to the *Cultivator*, he resumed: "I shall continue letters in *Cultivator*. Those for May and June you may find of interest as covering ground recently gone over. I was much pleased with the character of Mr. Chas. Goddard's remark upon my letter. Nothing seems to me so lacking in ordinary letters from England as the neglect of those *minor features* which make up the *peculiarity* of the new scenes. What I want is to give those who read the letters the advantage, not of my knowledge, or of my opinion, or the opinion of anyone else; but of—*my eyes*."

Jersey was a constant delight to him. He spent something more than two months exploring all the corners of the island, studying its history, improving his French under the direction of an instructor, and outlining the months of travel for the future which was gradually shaping its course for him. The mild climate proved highly beneficial. His mode of daily living could not have been more wisely regulated for one in his state of health. It was long before the fresh-air treatment for tuberculosis was appreciated, yet Donald was daily doing for himself more wisely than could any physician. "A frequent walk of mine," runs a note in his travel album beneath a picture of the beach, "was along the sands of St. Aubin's Bay; the sand firm and white and the sea-air full of health." It was the beginning of a fight for health that was to end in victory.

Even in this beautiful haven he had further testing of

soul. Sorrow still pursued him, and he had many periods of homesickness and depression attendant upon uncertain health. News of his sister's rapid decline was reaching him regularly. On the 29th of November, from Liverpool, he had written to Mrs. Goddard: "'What shadows we are and what shadows we pursue.' Poor Lucretia, I fear I may never see her again." To Gen. Williams, on the 23d of January, he wrote: "I am pained to learn of Lucretia's increased illness. But I fear that under the Providence which has so inscrutably attended our life as a family, we must be prepared for the worst." The worst was not long in coming; a letter from Gen. Williams, received on the 16th of February, conveyed the news of Lucretia's death on January 16th. "Your last," replied Donald, "was a sad letter, and I can only hope regarding its most melancholy item of intelligence that it may not be without its good effects upon *each one of the three* who make up the remnant. . . ." To Mrs. Goddard, who had also written him, he replied: "Your kind though sad letter of January reached me just a month after the death of dear L. I was in some measure prepared for the tidings. . . . Yet it is very hard to make myself believe that she is indeed gone; that but three of us are left out of such a family! Who shall be next? It is perhaps foolish to put questions on paper, that everyone puts in mind; but if it be I, may it please God to bestow willingness to wait His pleasure. . . . I am much obliged by your kind particularity of description; and it is most pleasant to know that wishes and sympathies could not add to or detract from the quiet of her death, and that her last hours, at least were not passed unattended by friends. I thank you, as well for being there as for communicating everything of interest." Death, which had until now beset the family so sorely, was not again to lay finger upon it for thirty-six years.

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At length his residence in Jersey—protracted from day to day by reason of the late, cold spring—came to an end. On the 24th of March he bade a reluctant farewell to La Solitude and sailed by steamer for Weymouth, thence making his way through Dorchester and Salisbury to Winchester, where on the 27th he found a letter from Mr. White summoning him to London. In London, before Mr. White's arrival, he experienced the temporary shortage of funds and had the agonizing search for his belated letter which he has so humorously related in *Seven Stories*.<sup>1</sup> A few weeks before, Mr. White had apprised him of the appointment of a new consul; now he told him of his intention to return home and of his plan to sail from Liverpool on April 19th. By this time Donald had determined to continue his travels in Britain. On the 1st of April he left for an extended journey, proceeding partly by stage, chiefly on foot. From Kenilworth he wrote to Mrs. Goddard (April 10th, 1845):

Here I am in sight of the old Castle: it is five o'clock and raining. I have walked to-day from Stratford-on-Avon, a distance of fourteen miles—stopping an hour or two at Warwick to have a look at its famous Castle and Park, and to run through its queer old streets. . . . It is raining April showers and has been for hours. I am wet and drying by the fire, while a dinner of sole and chops is getting ready for me. A half-pint of sherry I have ordered to warm me, is by my elbow, and I stop a moment to drink your good health. My luggage has gone down by railway—(I only carry a small portmanteau) to Coventry, where I shall be to-morrow night. On Wednesday (yesterday) I was rambling over Stratford-on-Avon, chasing out the old walks of Shakespeare, gossiping with the old woman who shows his birthplace, sauntering in the church-yard, walking out to his Anne Hathaway's home, &c., &c. I stopped at the Red Horse; had the room Irving occupied, accidentally.

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 12-22.

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Walked to-day through the Charlcote Park, the old seat of the Lucys, where Shakespeare first offended. On Tuesday I walked from Chipping Norton to Stratford, distance twenty-two miles, between breakfast and dinner; the previous day left Woodstock, passing by Ditchley, the Lea place, by Whichwood Forest and Charlbury to Chipping Norton. Sunday passed at Woodstock; on Saturday was at Oxford—went over its Halls and into the Bodleian Library, the largest in England; on Friday walked from Streatley, a little village on the Thames, to Oxford, distance nineteen miles. On Thursday walked from Henley-on-Thames through Reading to Streatley, distance twenty miles; on Wednesday walked from Windsor to Henley.

As he rambled on through Derbyshire he was impressed by the decay of the inns along what were formerly the great coaching highways. Since the Liverpool and Manchester Railway had been completed only sixteen years before, he was in ample time to observe the effects of the new upon the old modes of travel during this transition period. One of the best of the few extended descriptions in his travel diaries concerns his experience at one of these inns:

(*April 14th, 1845.*)—Besides destroying the old race of portly and independent coachmen with their attachees of grooms and porters and hangers-on, the swift locomotion of the present day has been the ruin of many fine old inns which may be frequently seen along what are now the by-roads of travel in England, their shut doors and empty and noiseless courts telling drearily of their desertion. I particularly remember on coming over the green hills in central Derbyshire out of that most beautiful of valleys—Dove Dale—the quiet loneliness of what was once a great London and Manchester highway. The turf was creeping more and more over the macadamed road and had already made green all the wide space between the walls save a single narrow cart-track. The mile-stones of iron, showily painted, were accumulating great blotches of rust;

even the little toll-house had an antiquated and deserted look, and the gate hung slouchingly, half-open and half-shut. A drover or two going with their herds to the Derby Fair were the only persons I met in a distance of six or seven miles.

At the end of a long plantation of larches upon a high hill overlooking half a dozen little valleys, I came upon one of the old coach-inns. It stood by itself: with the exception of one or two clustered hamlets in the valley below, there was no house in sight. Its great stone courts, sweeping around the paved square, were open to the road. The doors were all of them shut, and the stone pebbles in the court were nearly all encircled with a green turflet. The inn itself, which was a square, large mansion, and which stood just far enough back from the roadside to allow a coach and four to be driven up in dashing style between it and the door, was closed at every point, and was dismally silent. I did not even see a dog stirring. The great black sign which was still hanging between the front windows was so rusted and weather-beaten that I could not at all make out its burthen, and the ivy which clambered up in rich style from either side the door was shaking its uncropt branches over it. . . .

A mile further along the way appeared the high roofs and long line of outbuildings belonging to a now silent but once noisy and bustling claimant of traveler's patronage. It had even more pretensions to grandeur, now unfortunately exposing it the more to expressions of pity and regret. Without doubt, they had some day been great rivals. . . . But the bustle once attending the arrival, two or three times in the day, of the London coach with its crowded top-load . . . live now only in . . . memories . . . and . . . dreamy fancies. The coach is put on some ignoble route in a suburban neighborhood; the groom has found a place in the city stables, or acquires a doubtful livelihood by picking up a few halfpence as coach-porter about some town inn. The coachman is dead, or has become a small farmer, or yet upon the box growls at the dull hacks which are allowed him, and mutters curses on the rail[way].



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. . . It was the middle of [the] afternoon when I came up with the second inn. I had walked over the hills from the little town of Ashbourne, in the forks of the Dove, that morning, and . . . was curious to learn what sort of hospitality one of these great old houses of a by-gone time might afford, in its present abandonment. The smoke was rolling lazily from only a single one of the many chimney tops and the great door of the vestibule to which I first applied was fastened. Opposite was another through which I entered, and had gone half-way down the great bare hall when a middle-aged woman appeared at its lower end and beckoning me forward showed me into a large parlor where, to my surprise, a coal fire was burning in a large grate. . . . It was by no means an old-fashioned house, having been built somewhere between 1820 and '30, when coaching was at its highest promise; indeed, had it been old, its decay of traffic would in some measure be associated with its age and so bereave it of that peculiar regard which seemed to belong to it as the monument of an extinct system. The high walls and ornamented cornice and generous casements and silken bell-pulls, above all the rich blue and gilt china upon the table, bespoke the luxuries of the present age. Two or three heavy mahogany tables stood about the room; the chairs were of an old style and stuffed, with hair-cloth dressing. . . . A series of hunting pictures in faded gilt frames hung about the room, besides one or two sporting portraits over the mantle. It was just one of those rooms which with a roistering company at one or two of the tables, and a chat of two or three around the grate, would have been one of the most cheerful rooms imaginable; but which, alone, the great hall silent, all still above and around, save an occasional footfall of the solitary maid in the chambers, or the harsh wind shaking the casements, was fearfully dismal.

A superannuated old gray-hound came in with the waiter and stretched himself composedly on the rug at my feet. . . . I had intended only a stop to dine, but while sitting the rain began to fall and soon increased to a storm. I was obliged to content myself



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with an old newspaper and those wandering fancies part of which are here set down, for the evening. My bed was hung round with heavy red curtains, and the windows similarly attired—the only ones, as I saw from without, which retained this trace of their former state.

A bit of broiled ham and an egg at eight o'clock of a morning as dark and threatening as had been the night. As I looked out of the window, a shepherd in his gray frock, who was now servitor in place of groom, was driving a scanty flock of a dozen ewes from the great stable court. The great gates were thrown down from their hinges, and a few hurdles ranged about the great stable entrance had confined the little flock from the night's storm. The sovereign I offered in payment had to be sent a mile away to be changed. I went to the door unattended and the driving currents in the great building almost slammed it against me. Two or three times I turned back to look at its empty windows and its silent courts. At length a plantation of firs and pines sighing in the wind shut it from my sight.<sup>1</sup>

Passing on by way of Bakewell and Manchester he reached Liverpool the evening of the 16th, and from the Clayton Arms Hotel despatched a letter to Gen. Williams. "I find myself in Liverpool at length and waiting for Mr. White's return from the Continent," he wrote. "My health is very good. I have walked something over one hundred miles the fortnight past through Berkshire, Oxfordshire, Warwickshire, and parts of Derbyshire. The particulars of my route I have communicated to Mrs. Goddard. . . . I keep a small book of notes such as I can carry in my pocket, and in my brief method—making a single word the exponent of a scene. You will see some letters of mine perhaps in the *Commercial*. I have my doubts as to the policy of such news-

<sup>1</sup> See *Wet Days at Edgewood*, 225–230, for a few paragraphs based upon this entry.

paper writing and indeed only am induced in the hope of giving passing gratification to friends with whom I cannot so fully communicate. I am aware some would have a pride in abstaining, though capable of giving far more interest to such letters; yet it seems to me a foolish pride. . . ." On the 19th of April he saw Mr. White off on the *Hibernia* for America, and two days later resumed his wanderings.

May 6th, 1845, saw him again in London, where on the 15th he wrote to Mrs. Goddard from 149 Aldersgate Street. "I hardly remember where my last was dated, dear Mary. . . . Since then I have been through Ireland and the south of Wales; have drunk out of the Giant's Well at the great Causeway; slept at Armagh and Belfast; attended service in a Dublin cathedral; strolled after sunset in the rich, wild glens of the county of Wicklow; been tossed over the Irish Channel and into the bay of Bristol; walked under the broken walls of the old castle of Cardiff; and clambered to the tops of some of the highest of the Welsh hills . . . and next week will find me among the hills and streams of Westmoreland and the week after amid the 'banks and braes' of Scotland." At Wicklow he had visited the Model Farm; at Armagh he had spent that "wet day at an Irish inn" which lived later in the pages<sup>1</sup> of one of his best stories; at Merthyr-Tydvil he went through the iron-works. His diary record of the coach journey to Abergavenny merits a place here:

At ten, or a quarter after, the coach from Swansea comes rattling up in the rain. . . . In ten minutes more the fresh horses are on and the Abergavenny goes crowding in the shower to the top. I go into the coach office . . . and put my name down

<sup>1</sup> *Seven Stories*, 43-72.

for an inside. The back-seat is full—a youngish woman with a young baby in her arms; beside her is a young Welsh girl of ten summers, modest and pretty. Presently the hat-box which had filled the vacancy beside me and which I had anticipated as affording the most agreeable companionship of all, gives place to a Merthyr's granny in a heavy home-spun cloak and black bonnet tied round her head with a white neck-cloth spotted with crimson. . . . At length the whip snapped, the old lady flung herself back with an Oh, dear! and the coach rattled away from the Castle Inn door where the stout boots stood touching his cropped-crowned hat for a parting adieu. . . .

Unfortunately, the valley beside which the road goes up to the east of Wales, and all its sights, are the opposite side of the way from that on which I sit, and with a most provoking pertinacity the old woman keeps her black bonnet bobbing directly between me and the window. A cruel but effectual expedient occurs to me to be rid of the annoyance. By opening the window next me, I throw such a draft of damp air upon the old lady's head that she is fain to withdraw it into the corner of the coach. But who can reckon on a woman's submission? She asks me in her broken English to draw up the glass. It is easy for me to misunderstand and reach . . . across to shut the opposite window. The old lady indeed interposes a "nae, nae," and the woman with the baby giggles and the little maid opposite looks very willing but afraid to laugh outright. I sit gazing steadfastly through the glass upon the enlarged prospect not wholly with a conscience void of offence, yet satisfied that the end justified the means. . . .

In the outskirts of one of these little villages at the sign of the Colliers Arms we leave the woman with the babe. Her opposite neighbor in the big cloak takes the vacant seat and now that I have closed my window against the scudding drops of rain opens her own with a self-satisfied smile and taking from the basket at her feet a huge loaf of cake, a bit of jack-knife from her pocket which she opens daintily, she proceeds earnestly with her *dejeuner*,

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the little girl looking all the while furtively and with humorsome glances at me upon the zeal of the old lady.

Nor can I forget the bright-eyed, ruddy-cheeked boy in a tasseled cap and nice-lined gown over his blue clothes who was waiting for this little Welsh maid at the Beaufort Arms in the beautiful valley town of Clydarch. I lost sight of her as she stepped out of the coach and the groom closed the door; but through the window I could see the arch and proud look of the boy as he ran his eye restlessly over the lookers-on, or suffered it to rest, as seemed to me, upon some object about his own height, with a most intent gaze, which some sudden fancy would instantly divert. I remember, too, the rich suffusion of color that ran over his face as he once or twice caught my gaze in his furtive glance. . . . Presently a pair of pattering feet—two pairs—walked round the coach and out of hearing. . . .

At length the scene grew broader; the stream flowed leisurely under wooded banks; the hills kept back and divided for half a dozen little dells—which were big enough to be valleys in England—to peep out upon the broad, rich basin on which lay spread like a map the lanes and enclosures and roofs of the old town of Abergavenny.<sup>1</sup>

“I have this day only come into Scotland,” he wrote to Gen. Williams on May 31st, 1845, from Kelso. “My last was dated London, which place I left on Friday a week ago. I passed through the counties of Essex, Suffolk, Cambridge, Lincoln, York, Durham, and Northumberland. Sunday last I spent in Cambridge, attending service in King’s College Chapel, the finest building in England. At Lincoln I spent half a day, at York half a day, and was at Hull on my way.” On the same day he wrote enthusiastically to Mrs. Goddard: “I have time for only a line. Here I am in the midst of beauties such as you may dream of if you read *Mar-*

<sup>1</sup> Cf. “A Ride in the Rain.” *Southern Literary Messenger* (April 1848), 209-211.

*mion*, or hear the 'Blue Bonnets' sung, over night. One way are the Cheviots, blue as the sky that kisses them—another way are the Eildon hills and that Sandy Knowe where Walter Scott spent his boy days—just by, the most beautiful Tweed is murmuring between banks prettier than the pictures you see of them; then there is Kelso Abbey and Roxburgh Abbey and Melrose and Dryburgh where Sir Walter lies, and Selkirk and Ettrick and the Yarrow all within convenient tramping distance. Yesterday I ate my bread and cheese and soused them in a pint of home-brewed ale within sight of the ruin of Norham Castle (*Marmion*) and rode in the coach over Twisel Bridge—

‘they crossed  
The Till by Twisel Bridge.  
High sight it is, and haughty.’

(*Marmion*, C[anto] vi.)”

From Inverness, whither reverence for the memory of his forebear, Donald Grant, had drawn him, he wrote to Gen. Williams on the 16th of June: “Since my last (from Kelso, I think) I have visited Edinburgh, where I spent three days, Stirling, Melrose, Dalkeith, Kinross, Perth, Dunkeld—which place I left for this on Friday last. Thus far I have accomplished my trip in good health, always busied with new objects and meeting with no mishap or loss—saving on Thursday last the taking a pound less than I ought in change and not discovering my error until fifty miles away. . . . I miss a companion sadly, particularly in these wild districts of the North; but by keeping myself busied with a constant succession of new objects I avoid that sense of loneliness which would otherwise be very oppressive. When I come again, it shall be with a companion of some sort. I am by

no means sure that improvement of opportunity is anything less from lack of company, since attention which might otherwise be devoted to conversation or remark is now from very necessity given to constant and unremitting observation. I think I could safely submit to examination on any point connected with the appearance, situation, climate, &c., &c., of all the towns yet visited. A letter from my uncle by the *Hibernia* favors a long stay, primarily on the ground of health and secondarily in view of fuller observation, hinting that such observations may ensure some profit by publication. I am not so sanguine of such a result. With few exceptions the literary men of our country have impoverished themselves by their labors. The mere reputation of being a literary man I by no means desire. To be among the foremost of such is indeed worth an effort; but when such effort involves what it does, the matter is debatable. It is easy for a fool to empty his head or his purse, either singly or together. A wise man only, knows how to keep both *full*. I did not write that as a proverb, but I think it will stand stronger tests than some proverbs that are in the mouths of men. . . . I shall make it an object to see the ground I go over thoroughly, however limited my stay may be. If I stay a winter it will be necessary for me to encroach another thousand upon my diminishing property. My pride will always prevent me from repairing a small inheritance by marriage, unless I can either bring a reputation or a profession which will be a match for fortune. It will require time to gain either. This puts a *home* for me far into the future. The weather is now summer, very warm. The wildness of the Highlands is most interesting in contrast with the rich scenes of the South. There are many Grants here. I find yet no tidings of the family of my ancestry. The name be-



longs to a Peer, the Earl of Seafield, who has large estates a short way from the town. It is the name also of a Clan, and I shall possess myself of a plaid of the Clan, who have each their own."

From Inverness he turned southward by way of the Caledonian Canal, visiting Loch Garry, Fort William, the Scotch lakes, Dumbarton, Glasgow, Ayr, Kilmarnock, and Dumfries, passing into England again through Carlisle, and spending the night of June 25th at Ireby. He was now bound for the English lake district. The next day he rambled about Keswick and toward evening turned into St. John's vale where the "grand mountain scenery, the waterfalls in the clefts of the mountains, the lakes and tarns, and the wild passes" impressed him strongly. Failing to secure shelter at a lonely little hostelry he walked on in the gathering gloom and about ten o'clock found refuge in the Swan Inn, beloved of Wordsworth. He was getting close to the heart of rural Britain by his method of travel, which he has himself delineated charmingly:

At night you wander wearily into one of those little, close-nestled, gray-thatched country villages far away from the great lines of travel, where even the thunder of a post-chaise through its single, narrow street is a rare event, where the children stop their seeming play to have a look at you, and rosy-faced girls peep out from behind half-open doors. A little by itself, with a bench each side the door, is the inn of the "Eagle and the Falcon." . . . Here, alone, beside a brisk fire kindled with furze, you can watch the white flame leaping lazily through the black lumps of coal, and enjoy the best fare. . . . Nor is the fare to be spurned. The bread may not be as white as in the shops about Whitehall; but it is sweet, and the butter is fresh and as yellow as gold. And she [the hostess] will cut you a nice rump-steak to broil, and put you



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down a pot of potatoes, and half a head of a savoy. And she will scrape a little horse-radish to dress your steak with, and bring you a pitcher of foaming "home-brewed." And if it be in the time of summer berries she will set before you, afterward, a generous bowl of them sprinkled with sugar, and cream to eat upon them; and if too late or too early for her garden stock, she bethinks herself of some little pot of jelly in an out of the way cupboard of the house, and setting it temptingly in her prettiest dish she coyly slips it upon the white cloth with a little apology that it is not better and a little evident satisfaction that it is so good.

After a dinner that the walk, the cleanliness, and the good will of the hostess have made more enjoyable than any one in your recollection, you may sit musing before the glowing fire as quiet as the cat that has come in to bear you company. And at night you have sheets as fresh as the air of the mountains. The breakfast is ready when you wish and there are chops, and fresh eggs, and toast, and coffee. For all this, you have less to pay than a dinner would cost in town; you have the friendly wishes of the good woman to follow you, and more than this you see a remnant of the simplicity of English country character.<sup>1</sup>

June 27th he went on by Grasmere to Rydal and feasted his eyes at last upon Rydal Mount. The evening he spent rowing upon Windermere; the night he passed at the Salvation Inn, Ambleside. Saturday, the 28th, he viewed Windermere, Grasmere, and Rydal, and looked away to Helvellyn "in sunshine and shade," from the vantage-point of a neighboring hill, with Wordsworth's lines recurring to him throughout the day. In later years he expanded his brief diary entries:

Here, at last, I was to come into near presence of one of the living magicians of English verse—in his own lair, with his moun-

<sup>1</sup> "Notes by the Road," No. 1, *American Review* (February 1846), 154.

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tains and his lakes around him. But I did not interview him; no thought of such audacity came nigh me; there was more modesty in those days than now. Yet it has occurred to me since—with some relentings—that I might have won a look of benediction from the old man of seventy-five, if I had sought his door, and told him—as I might truthfully have done—that within a twelve-month of their issue his beautiful sextette of Moxon volumes were lying, thumb-worn, on my desk in a far-off New England college-room; and that within the month I had wandered up the valley of the Wye with his *Tintern Abbey* pulsing in my thought more stirringly than the ivy-leaves that wrapped the ruin; and that only the week before I had followed lovingly his White Doe of Rylstone along the picturesque borders of Wharfedale and across the grassy glades of Bolton Priory and among the splintered ledges

“Where Rylstone Brook with Wharf is blended.”

Poets love to know that they have laid such trail for even the youngest of followers; and though the personal benedictions were missed, I did go around next morning—being Sunday—to the little chapel on the heights of Rydal where he was to worship; and from my seat saw him enter; knowing him on the instant; tall (to my seeming), erect, yet with step somewhat shaky; his coat closely buttoned; his air serious and self-possessed; his features large, mouth almost coarse; hair white as the driven snow, fringing a dome of baldness; an eye with a dreamy expression in it, and seeming to look—beyond, and still beyond. He carried, too, his serious air into his share of the service and made his successive responses of “Good Lord deliver us!” and “Amen!” with an emphasis that rung throughout the little chapel.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *English Lands, Letters, and Kings*, 3.302-304. The reader may care to have the diary entry from which this passage is derived: “Sunday, June 29th. Attended Rydal Chapel in the morning. . . . Commencement of service. Entrance of Wordsworth; corner seat; dress; eye; general manner; uttering of responses.” In the *English Lands* account of the visit to the Wordsworth country there is a slight confusion of dates.

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From the lake district he returned by way of Kendal, Bolton Abbey, Harrogate, Sheffield, Northampton, Weston, Newport Pagnell, and St. Albans to London, whither he arrived July 5th. After five days in London he went through Gosport and Portsmouth to the Isle of Wight, where he enjoyed four delightful days. While on the island he read Legh Richmond's story of *The Dairyman's Daughter*, and visited her home near Arreton. "One's highest conception of a rural cottage derived from English poetry . . . could not find better actual embodiment than in the Dairyman's Cottage," he wrote in his diary, July 14th. "There was the . . . Bible with her name in her own hand, and her prayer-book, and at the window the tree of her planting; there was the visiting book with names from every Christian nation. How very strange! Here was a poor woman in a poor cottage, with scarce any education and no beauty, with nothing about her to be envied but her hope; yet the story of that hope and its reason and strength not eloquently but truly told has drawn hundreds to look at the familiar things of her life; to look at her Bible, to see where she sat, where she sickened, where she died. Doesn't it speak poorly for the prevalence of Christian hope when a single instance in one away from the temptations of the world, is the world's wonder?"

Having now completed his first journeyings in the British Isles, he was ready for the Continent. An interesting letter to his uncle, Walter Mitchell, of Hartford, Connecticut, written before departure from the Isle of Wight (undated, but evidently written July 14th, 1845), and a letter to the *Cultivator* summarize the recent travel:

. . . Since my last to you I have been through England on four different routes and have gone through most of Scotland and

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Ireland. . . . Through three of the English counties I traveled on foot and through all have gone leisurely so that my observation has been thorough and widely extended. I have visited all the places of interest in or near the chief cities, been through every English cathedral of note, visited baronial residences and modern palaces, and had picture views from the splendid collections of royalty and dukes to the colored lithographs upon the ward rooms of a Greenwich hospital. I have heard speeches from Lords Brougham, Stanley, Campbell, and Lyndhurst; and have talked by the half hour with a farm laborer over a hedge in the beautiful county of Westmoreland. I have drunk out of the Giant's Well at the Causeway and treated a serjeant of the guard to a stoup of ale in the vaults of Edinburgh Castle; but am not yet seduced out of regard to the steady habits of home, nor have lost the love of that home. Nay, I am at times thoroughly homesick and look westward with many fond longings, which the prospect of a winter's stay in Italy would nowise tend to diminish. The truth is, it is no small matter to be alone some thousands of miles away from any face—among millions of faces—that you know. In the cities this sense of loneliness is most oppressive, and may drive me to a quicker return than I wish.

I was very sorry to find in your letter no mention of family history, by aid of which I might pursue inquiry at Inverness. There are many Grants in the neighborhood—two of them in the Peerage—the Earl of Seafield and Lord Glenelg. It is the name of one of the great northern clans; the motto, "Stand fast." I purchased a piece of the Grant plaid and, if my funds will permit the outlay, shall order a full Highland suit of the Grant tartan before returning.

Of a proposed stay for the winter, you speak chiefly as regards health—certainly the great consideration; yet one in respect of which there exists such difference of opinion, even among medical men, that perhaps—with proper avoidance of exposure—accident is as safe a guide as the dicta of anyone. Still your views will be

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kept in mind and I shall consult a physician at Paris as suggested. If I can meet with any agreeable companion or party—American or English—with whom I can establish intercourse to continue for the winter, I shall in all probability remain; if not fortunate in meeting with some one to relieve the tedium of a winter's residence, I shall return. My means pecuniarily are the products of a capital of about \$10,000, which by my present stay is reduced to \$9,000, and if I stay the winter will be reduced to \$8,000. . . . I am now ready for *La Belle France*, for which I leave two days hence. . . .

My observation extended over nearly all England—only two counties, Shropshire and Norfolk, were unvisited. Through Berkshire, Oxfordshire, Warwickshire, Cumberland, Westmoreland, and a large part of Derbyshire, and Berwickshire (in Scotland), I strolled on foot. During this pedestrian range of over three hundred miles, I took frequent occasions to visit the farm houses and laborers' cottages along the way; have observed as closely as circumstances admitted, the habits of the industrial portions of the population, have conversed with them at their simple homes and in the fields, and not unfrequently have made trial of their implements of husbandry, beside them. Two or three bouts round a field in South Devon, I remember going, with my hands to the stilts of a crazier plow than I ever saw in the most retired districts of New England. Only a month since, I wearied myself to exhaustion with one of the heavy Cumberland scythes which, though exceedingly clumsy and ill fitted in every other respect, are of the best tempered metal and retain a fine edge. The mower was at first unwilling to trust his scythe in my hands; but after promising him a six-pence, *pour boire*, he willingly granted the favor and admitted the work to be very fairly done.<sup>1</sup>

On the 16th of July he sailed for Havre, visited Rouen on the 17th, and reached Paris the night of the 18th, staying at the Hotel Meurice. The transition to a country of foreign

<sup>1</sup>The *Cultivator* (October 1845), 300. Written from Paris, August 1845.

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tongue was doubtless none too easy. In his diary the entry for Saturday, July 19th, begins with the words "Despondency, homesick, and loneliness." A fortunate meeting with two of his Yale classmates on the same day enabled him to shake off his black mood. After a few days he secured lodging at 55 Rue Neuve St. Augustin, and remained in Paris until August 23d. One of the most charming and characteristic letters of this entire period of foreign travel he wrote from his little eyrie on the fourth story of the Maison Leppine to Mrs. Goddard:

(*August 1st, 1845.*)—I was thinking this morning, Mary, as I finished dressing and drew together the curtains which hide my little bed in a niche of the wall and put on my hat and took a look into the long mirror over the little marble fireplace, how much I should like to stroll down on such an August morning into the avenue of old elms that stand round your door, brushing the dew away from the short grass, tramping under the honeysuckles that blossom in your piazza, and through the grass again and between the syringa bushes into the well trimmed or the weedy garden (it would matter little which), and sit down on the stone step to the summer house, and look and muse, and muse and look. Be sure the thought of this does not come to me without accompanying thoughts of some rosy faces and some that are not rosy; of kind words and none that are not kind; of pattering feet to tread along with me; and along with them a bushy-haired, red-tongued, panting dog.

Well, here I am in a Parisian house, living as the Parisians live. In Scotland I drank Scotch ale; in Ireland, Dublin stout; in London, porter; and now I drink red and white wine and dine at the restaurants. My room is a bedroom, though the curtains hide it. Here is a fine mahogany desk on which I write; yonder a table, a sofa, an easy chair, and the floor is of waxed oak. Out of the window I look into the court with its range of buildings around, and



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over their tops and down the street the high fronts of the opposite houses on every floor of which lives a family. Out of the windows in the ridge of the roof an old woman has just hung her dishcloths to drip in the next tier; yet upon the roof a woman is brushing shoes. Farther below, an old lady, more respectably accounted, just now opened the blinds to water some plants that live in a very, very narrow bacony. Next below us, no one is yet stirring and below farther the buildings hide. I have just tinkled my little bell out at the window which is an intimation that I am ready for breakfast. In five minutes the servant will bring a tray with butter, two eggs boiled, milk, coffee, and the best bread you ever saw. This is a French breakfast excepting the eggs which I have had the extravagance to add, bringing my charge for *dejeuner* up to one franc and a half. For dinner I wander away either to the Palais Royal where I have my bowl of soup, three dishes of meat, tart, dessert, and bottle of wine for two francs; or to the English roast-beef houses where I revive the recollections of the rich dinners of Britain over beef, ale, and cheese. In the evening I wander down into the Tuileries gardens and sit for an half hour watching the moving millions under the shadows of the heavy avenues, or look at the water sparkling from the fountains under the light of a thousand lamps, and grow very poetic until the drums of a corps of soldiers give warning of the gates' closing, when I ramble on to the Place de la Concorde and stand with my arms folded under the column of Luxor and look upon new fountains and new thousands and listen to ten thousand sounds, or walk on pushing my way through the throng that gathers in the Champs Elysées every night in the year to hear such noises and to see such sights as make one seem in dream-land.

Two days since was the great day of the Fête—the last of the *Three Days of July*. You can form no idea of the multitudes. Imagine some three or four hundred thousand always moving—for the French can never stand still—and always together, women, children, dogs, soldiers, and mounted guards: the fun being every



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year paid for by the deaths of some half dozen who are crushed in the crowd. The great show of the day, amid innumerable lesser ones, was the fireworks of the evening, accompanied with a continuous roar of cannon firing from the Hotel des Invalides, the home of the old soldiers of France. I could tell you about red, dusky balls of fire shooting up some three hundred feet in the air, then bursting with the sound of a musket and sending a shower of white globules of fire all over the sky, lighting up the fountains and statues and men's faces and colonnades, like day. I could tell you of four or five in different parts of the heavens bursting together and making the illuminated columns and arches, and even the moon and stars as pale as sickness; and could tell you of ten thousand rockets streaming from every quarter, not dying dully but vanishing in a light explosion that sends out green and golden and crimson stars that float upon the night air in waves and finally go out of sight amid the great wreaths of smoke from the cannon; and of beautiful little gondolas with crimson streamers, floating on the Seine, which suddenly would burst in pieces and send up showers of colored light which, beautiful as it was in the sky, could not compare with the reflection on the waters. Then there was a mimic volcano that spouted for ten minutes hideous torrents of flame and smoke half over the heavens and covered with its lurid glare—the whole. I say if I were to try and describe such things they would not give you any idea of what hardly seems a reality.

But a fig for such letter writing! You ask for description. Pray, do you know what a silly request you make? Suppose I were to count you the statues in the garden of the Tuileries and tell you how many naiads are heaving water out of marble urns and how many giants are wrestling upon the tops of pedestals and how long an avenue of lime trees stretches as far as you can see from the Triumphal Arch down to the Palace and how the other night the whole two miles of distance was blazing on either side with innumerable lamps that glittered among the leaves and how the

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windows of the Palace were each one of them a broad sheet of flame and how belts of lightning were braided round the huge entablature of the Arc de l'Etoile and how from either extremity of this distance rockets would flame into the sky and meeting midway just over the obelisk of Luxor drop glittering spangles of green and gold—pray, would you not tire of it?

Whom should I meet the other day—my second day in Paris—but two classmates, one of whom I thought safe on his tobacco plantation in Virginia and the other immured in the hospital at Boston. Yet here they are, and so I meet them everywhere—Americans, I mean—who, if not old acquaintances, yet we touch hands from knowing common friends. . . . I shall stop in *La belle France* till I know so much of the language as to keep my own money in my pocket, which at present is not easy. Expenses of living here are comparatively small. I pay for room, boot-cleaning, &c., fifteen francs a week (\$3); a franc and a half for breakfast, three francs for dinner, making some \$10 per week. By the by, you must manage to find some thin paper for letters, since coming to me in the interior of Europe there will be a difference of \$1 between thick paper and thin on a single letter. Also please give them for enclosure with Gen. Williams'.

. . . You and Uncle Walter will like my determination [to remain through the winter]; it will lessen pecuniary resources very much: in *every* other respect I anticipate improvement. You know my backward state in everything that regards social intercourse and must see there will be more hope of reform in longer travel than in shutting myself up at home again.

. . . I have written several letters for the *Commercial*—all of them political except one. Have you seen them? I have not yet seen the shows proper of Paris, but reserve the pleasure until I talk somewhat. Nothing in speaking is so difficult to overcome as fear of being wrong; however, I see some little children in the court below whom I want to toll up to my room with some candy that lies in my drawer and make them my teachers. How come

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Alfred and Julia on with their writing and does Alfred learn to swim these July days and is the hole under the maple deep as ever and are they through with haying in the valley and are huckleberries ripe and are the larks plenty in the meadows and is my gun growing rusty and do the robins eat the currants and have you green corn yet and new potatoes and are the early apples ripening and do the thunder showers come over the hill as they used to do and does the sun come out and make things look as pretty and bright and the robins sing and the crickets hop and the swallows twitter and the leaves glisten and the flowers smell sweet as they all used to do? Here is a parcel of questions for Alfred to answer; and you see that though in the most city-like of cities, I have not forgotten what makes pleasant country life, and it is no secret that my heart yearns, and has ever, among all the wonders of art for that which art cannot make.

Is Mrs G[oddard] with you? My regards to her, if so. She must look me out a wife, or does she still think (half right) that I ought never to marry? What does Norwich look like now? Are the churches done? Elegant, are they not? the whole of both of which jammed together could be put through some windows I have seen, without raising the window-frames; and as for the towers, why they would make a very considerable bit of scaffolding from the which to clean the sculpture within the aisles of Notre Dame. As for your bit of meeting-house, it would make a martin box to put out upon the tower of Rouen cathedral, where, however, people in the street below could not distinguish it from the old turrets, unless by the color. But I say so much only to give you some idea of what an old world this is, and I testify to my patriotism by putting at the end of this jargon a Hurrah for New England!

. . . Remember me to your father. I shall have strange things to tell him of whenever I sit down under the piazza with him again. But this world is a changing one—who knows we shall meet, or if meeting, shall meet there? Mary, when I look back

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ten years it is *always* with a sigh and a rising tear, and if I ever smile in looking forward the same time, it is a poor, sickly, forced smile.

Remember me to Uncle Perkins, to friends in New London who ever inquire about me, if there are any such. Give love and kisses to your family, and believe me truly yours, Donald.

A few passages from a letter of August 13th-15th, to Gen. Williams, may supplement the foregoing:

. . . Paris increases my admiration as I remain, though it does not grow in positive favor. I have no conception of the amount of vice that absolutely basks in the sunshine of popular favor. Any pretension to morality is the most odd thing in the world. In the British cities the grossness of such vice as exists disgusted me, and here its generality disgusts. You need not, I think, fear my falling very deeply into the habits of the Parisians. Still, it is my wish to know here, as I have tried to know elsewhere, whatever is very new and strange, though it be at the same time shocking to one's tastes. I spend my time in studying the language, in reading French, in visiting show places, and occasionally an evening at some of the theatres—reading the play first, which I find accustoms my ear to the sound. . . .

When you give my regards to Mr. White tell him I shall come home a Democrat, or (as I am really serious) perhaps it were as well not known. Observation of the old governments has, as you anticipated, thrown out of mind all the lesser distractions of party and given a general regard for our whole country and for the principles upon which the government is based; and as a consequence has inclined me to the side of those who are most strict and uncompromising in the advocacy of those principles. . . .

Letters and diary enable us to follow him on a round trip from Paris which occupied him from August 23d to October 30th, 1845:

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(*To Gen. Williams. HOTEL DES BERGUES, GENEVA, Sept. 8th, 1845.*)— . . . My stay in Paris was continued up to the 23d of August, my progress in the language being considerable, and sufficient to admit of my traveling without serious trouble. Fontainebleau I reached by rail and diligence. After looking over its magnificent palace, I started thence with a Connecticut companion [his classmate, Robert W. Forbes], on foot and in pedestrian attire, with only a knapsack, for the western borders of France. Our first night we passed half way to Sens, the second at Sens, and so on for four days; but finding the country uninteresting, took coach from Tonnerre to Dôle, and thence walked a hundred miles over the mountains to this place. The scenes and incidents of the trip have been every way pleasing, and the exercise advantageous. Our longest day's work was thirty miles, which with a knapsack on back weighing twelve or fifteen pounds and over mountain roads, is *enough*.

I have had the opportunity of seeing not only the face of the country; but the agricultural methods, the habits of the peasantry; in short, a comparison of the country life of France with that of England, and I need hardly say it is much in favor of the latter in every respect.

On Sunday (yesterday) I attended the principal church of the Reform principles and the whole appearance both of audience and preacher carried my recollections home more forcibly than any service I have before attended this side of the water. The manner of the speaker earnest and the attention good, offering altogether a striking contrast to the mummerly of the Catholic churches.

(*To Mrs. Goddard. GENEVA, Sunday evening, Sept. 7th, 1845.*)— . . . have walked over the Juras through most magnificent scenery to this gem of continental cities. The room in which I write is in the fourth story of the Hotel des Bergues and from the window I could toss this villainous pen into the waters of the lake, waters so blue and clear that I can see the pebbles twenty feet down. . . . Beyond the town rise some of the lesser limbs of the

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Alpine ranges; but the more distant, and chief of all, Mont Blanc, have had their heads in the clouds these three days. People of every nation and tongue are met together here and one hears at table as many languages as he sees dishes. . . . We are, in fact, somewhat behind the time for Swiss journeying; but shall have the advantage of inns, not crowds—guides disengaged, and perhaps a spice of adventure among the newly fallen snows of the passes. To-morrow, or next day at farthest, we set out with our shoes dressed with hobnails, an overcoat and a water-proof coat added to our knapsack, besides a pocket telescope and a brandy flask, which, by the way, is a very essential equipment amid the cold damp of the mountains. You must not fear my imprudence or exposure; so much of walking has given a very reliable amount of experience. It is quite impossible to give you any idea of the character of the scenery hereabouts, or of the wildness of the passage over the Juras. For fifteen miles on Wednesday last we *descended* all the way to the little town of Morez completely imbedded in the mountains, and for fifteen miles the following day we as constantly ascended—the road twining along the edge of precipices down which we could tumble stones three or four thousand feet into the valley below.

. . . Do not expect very frequent or very long letters from me while in the heat of these pedestrian adventures; but believe that my thoughts wander over the waters to your quiet nook of country far oftener than these letters. And do not tell me of all the little ills which may be source of disturbance; but of all that is agreeable, and of all your hopes. Rare as letters are at this distance, I want them to be all sunshine. A little cloud near the sun casts broad shadows and the farther off you are the more likely to rest on you. Give a gay tone and so will I.

My French talk is bungling, but makes waiters and shopkeepers understand. I hope to improve it in further travel and confirm it by practice in the south of France. . . . It is difficult to seize an hour from the business of travel. The day sees me upon



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the road and the night finds me wearied with the day and willing to seize upon the first sleeping moments. If in town, all its sights are to be seen—the most wearisome to the body of all possible employments.

By my last you will have learned my determination to stop this side the water the coming winter; and when I see the beautiful fields in this neighborhood amid the most beautiful scenery in the world and this city lying among them upon the borders of this sweet lake, I feel inclined to wish never to return. If I think thus here, what shall I think in Italy?

(*To the same.* VALLEY OF CHAMOUNI, SUISSE. HOTEL DE LA NOUVELLE COURONNE, Oct. 8th, 1845.)—It is a rainy day and I am fastened in the inn. If it had been pleasant I should have been at this hour (11) eight or nine thousand feet above the level of the sea traversing the Mer de Glace under the guidance of a couple of the valley guides. In addition to the rain, the guide has come in this morning to assure us that heavy snow has fallen on the passes and that the danger of avalanches will forbid our taking the intended route for some days.

Yesterday I was upon the top of the Flegère; to-day there is a foot of snow upon it and the hills around are all whited with it to within a thousand feet of the bottom of the valley. But you must know something of what I have been doing since my writing from Geneva. Nearly all of Switzerland has been marched over; its highest mountain passes and its most wonderful sights have come under trial or observation and we are now looking at the most grand objects of all Europe in the immediate neighborhood of Mt. Blanc, preparatory to our decampment for the season.

. . . Our longest walks have been from twenty-six to thirty miles and on one occasion, having missed my way and lost my companion, I was compelled to walk thirty-three miles with my knapsack weighing eighteen pounds, before reaching a stopping place for the night. Our highest ascents have been something over 8,000 feet and we have been most fortunate in weather among the



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mountains, rarely meeting with fresh snow or rain. From the Hospice of the Grimsel, something over seven thousand feet above sea-level, we made a detour over the glacier of the Aar, traversing the ice for ten miles and taking a dinner of cold goat's flesh and wine amid the ice and snows of the highest regions of the Alps. Upon the Wengern Alp we slept a night—a few miles distant from and in full sight of one of the highest mountains of Switzerland—to hear the falling avalanches. Edges of precipices and dizzy heights have become familiar things, and dangers that would be real at home only make the blood leap livelier amid these magnificent scenes. . . .

We had thought of taking the next adventure in point of difficulty—over the Col de Giant into Piedmont; but find four guides would be necessary and expenses of trip some twenty dollars each, which is more than can be paid in the present state of our purses even for adventure. Still, however, I hope to have something to tell of in a small way when I sit by your fire on some Christmas visit in years to come.

The weather is clearing; our guide has come and says we may safely go to the Montanvert on the edge of the Mer de Glace. If they have ink I will finish my letter in the midst of fresh fallen snows and within stone's throw of glaciers that last forever. 8 *o'clock evening*.—A beautiful moonlight night with the light dancing on all the mountain peaks. I have been to the Mer de Glace and am at Chamouni again; through snow six inches deep we tramped and the guides have assured us that our visit to the higher latitudes would be attended with imminent danger, so we are reluctantly obliged to arrange our departure for to-morrow toward the Great St. Bernard. The crevices in the glacier, which descend to an awful depth, are bridged over with the new-fallen snow and a step on them would be fatal. . . .

The entry in his diary for the 3d of October 1845 begins with the words "The day to be remembered by agreement

with M. W. G." A letter to Mrs. Goddard written from Paris, November 12th, 1845, makes clear the meaning:

. . . You find me at Paris again. I have already told you of my glorious run over the mountains of Switzerland, and left you last if my memory is right, in the valley of Chamouni. A subsequent visit to the famous pass of St. Bernard and the coming away in a snow storm, struggling through it waist-deep, was the most of an adventure that anywhere overtook us and served as the crowning act of our Swiss travels. Two days were spent at Geneva on our return and we took our departure from the old republican city on the morning of Saturday, the 18th of October.

On the morning of Sunday—following the Rhone through scenery that would have been magnificent to any eyes but those in which images of Mt. Blanc and the glaciers yet lingered—we reached Lyon, the second city of France. As little like Sunday was the day as one of our muster days in New England. We spent five days at Lyon. . . . Through Clermont, Limoges, Chateauroux, and Orleans, all which the children will find upon the map, we journeyed to Paris. Here I have taken rooms again and shall remain probably about a month. . . .

Meantime, how do you get on at home? Winter is upon you again, I suppose, though here there is no sign of it but the falling leaves. And Alfred, I suppose, a stout fellow driving about everywhere, and Julia an inch or two higher at the least and growing fast to be a Miss, and Henry trudging about holding by Carlo's ears—who by the way must be getting to be an old dog. And I suppose the dust is thick over the books and the pictures and the guns and the poles in the west chamber; and your garden is bare again and the light snows begin to fall and the quails to whistle and the wood-pile to grow smaller and the winter clothes to be made and the hogs to be killed and the mince pies to be mixed and Thanksgiving to be talked of and the long evenings to come with their books and their blaze and their fun. None of these for me except

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in imagination as I kindle up a little fire in my German stove out of two or three sticks and draw my chair before it and put my hat down upon the bureau under the glass and sit leaning upon my little round table and think and think, or look out of the window upon the noisy street full of people and omnibuses and carts, the shops on each side blazing with light, and above them, rising over opposite, the magnificent store houses—story above story—so high that I can hardly get a glimpse of the clear, blue sky and its scattered stars and the moon, which is made pale by the thousand lamps in the streets below.

By and by the great bell of the cathedral of St. Roch, where the crowd gathered to see Marie Antoinette go to execution, and upon whose steps, that I can see from my window, were killed thousands in the last revolution, strikes twelve. I undress and jump into my bit of a bed—smaller even than the white bedstead—and sleep till 8. There is no little musical voice to come to the door and say, “Uncle Don, Uncle Don, breakfast is ready!” But the noise of ten thousand voices and steps wake me and I wander away down the street to a café filled with little marble-topped tables and touching my hat to the woman at the desk I take my seat at one of them. Directly, there comes to me a waiter in a white apron and says, “*Que desirez vous, Monsieur?*” I say, “*Cafe au lait,*” and he brings me a nice dish of coffee and nice bread and butter, but very little of either. I spend an hour over it—reading the newspapers and observing the dozens who come and go—and after pay[ing] 22 cents for my breakfast and bowing to the woman of the dais am in the great streets of Paris again. I am looking at the wonders of the great city, which are never wholly seen, or I am reading French, or with a friend at his medical lecture until 5. Then we dine, not in a home way; but in the same salon with perhaps seventy others—tables with two only, tables with four, and tables with ten—and the waiters serve you to soup, bread, three dishes, dessert, and half a bottle of wine, for two francs. Going down we find ourselves in the great court of the

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Palais Royal. No description can convey to you any idea of the brilliancy, the jewels, the throngs, the fountains that meet the eye at every hand. While I stroll there looking in at the shop windows, the richest in the world, bustling among the throng of the most thronged part of the most thronged city of continental Europe, you are sipping quietly a cup of tea before the stove in the long room, Mr. G. opposite, A. one side, J. and H. the other, Carlo snoozing before the fire, little dreaming of the sights his old master sees.—But it is 4 o'clock; my landlady has just brought me in a handkerchief which she took from my hands yesterday to hem and for which she insists on receiving nothing—a rare thing. For next to vanity, avarice is the controlling element of French character. I had my daguerreotype taken in my Swiss costume at Lyon, and if I find opportunity will send it you.

. . . It occurs to me, Mary, that a year ago the 3d of October, as we rode together into Norwich, we talked of our probable whereabouts that day a year on. And where were you, and where was I? I turn back to my journal and find I was upon the great road of the Simplon, between the two miserable towns of Leuk and Sion, on foot, with knapsack on back, trudging along the dusty way, occasionally met by some English family on their way to Italy, occasionally stopping to pick a flower, or to gaze on some magnificent view—opening through the hills that border the Rhine—of the higher Alps. Sometimes, as we drew near in the latter end of the day to the vine-growing countries, we would steal a cluster or two from the vineyards beside the way; sometimes chat with a chance passerby; and once drew a story from a passing soldier of a murder committed only the week before upon that very road, and he pointed us out the spot, and told us he was himself in search of the assassin. With the sun two hours high we tramped into the village of Sion, a strange town with high old castles guarding it now untenanted. We wandered up to them that night after a dinner at the *Croix Blanche* and sat upon a rock from which we could see miles along the valley of the Rhone, and over-

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look the town, and catch views of mountains, higher than the highest at home, that threw long shadows over fir forests and vineyards, and before we left, over the whole plain; for the sun had set before we went down to our night quarters, and when we reached them, it was bedtime. Such was my 3d October 1845. Pray, what was yours?

. . . And what does your father say about war with England and about President Polk? Tell him these wretchedly one-sided governments of the old world have nearly made a Democrat of me, and what would he say to my going back to the great borough of Salem and leasing the old homestead of Mr. Jonathan Hilliard, and putting myself under the tutelage of Squire Matthias Baker, and being made Squire myself, and creeping along by occasional harangues around the anvil at the corner, on rainy days, so as in process of time to be made town clerk? Eh, isn't that a prospect to make one's eyes glisten even in Paris!

I would give a guinea to see such a man as your postmaster, Captain H., set down all at once in the middle of the Place de la Concorde just at this hour—8 o'clock by St. Roch. How he would open his eyes to see that column of Luxor—a single block of granite towering a hundred feet into the air, and the fountains with their naiads and nereids and dolphins throwing hogsheads of glittering water into the air every moment, and the place itself—bigger than his farm—paved with hewn stones, over which thousands are tramping every hour, and which is made as light as day by a hundred brazen lamp-posts higher than his house and the cost of each one of which would build him a little palace. How he would wonder at the great white horses rearing on the pedestals of stone and shaking their manes into the air, yet never changing place; for they are hewn out of marble. I fancy the old man would rub his spectacles—and so would I, if I wore them. Then there is a window I would like to set him before, in the Palais Royal—that of the royal victualler. Such apples!—bigger than your melons that grow by the summer house; and such pears! five would fill

your water pail; and there are fresh fish from Scotland, fresh dates from Algiers, pomegranates from Sardinia, figs from Cyprus, melons from Portugal, fawns from the Pyrenees, grapes from Madeira, oranges from Seville, bear's meat from Russia, and chamois flesh from the Alps.

This is a long letter and perhaps will not pay for the reading; but it has been well intended, so let not good intentions be uncompensated. . . . Remember me to your father and his family, to friends in N[ew] L[ondon], a twig of the ear to Alf, a kind remembrance to Mr. G., a kiss to Henry, one on each cheek to Julia, and an affectionate good bye to yourself.

(*To Gen. Williams. PARIS, RUE DAUPHINE, Nov. 14th, 1845.*)— . . . We visited nearly every place of interest in Switzerland and were enabled to extend our observations as *voyageurs à pied* to many a magnificent spot wholly inaccessible to the posting traveler. We rarely took guides and never mounted a mule. Our expenses in consequence were exceedingly light, not averaging more than ten francs a day each. We avoided the larger hotels frequented by English and posting parties, not so much from motives of economy as from the fact that in our mountain dresses we would hardly be reckoned sufficiently *bien tenu* for the *table d'hôte*. . . . My expenses are, I think, less than those of most, though not so little as they ought to be. . . .

As in Great Britain, he was all along keeping an eye upon the countryside and thinking of the æsthetic deficiencies of rural life in America. "Its [Geneva's] hedges are like English hedges," runs one of his *Cultivator* letters, "and its roads like English roads. The tastes of its inhabitants have, too, a smack of rurality. There are public walks shaded with the richest native trees, or a public garden where the poorest may study botany better than in books. When shall we have such things? When we are wiser, surely; and when



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we are richer, surely—for we shall be richer for having them.”<sup>1</sup>

When next we hear of him, the word is from Italy:

(*To Gen. Williams. NAPLES, Jan. 14th, 1846.*)— . . . I left Paris about the 20th of December, after the weather had become unpleasantly cold, in company with a Mr. Foster, of Boston, for the south of France and Italy. We were some eight or ten days between Paris and Marseilles—stopping a day at Lyon, a day at Avignon, a day (Sunday) at Nismes, a day at Arles, and two days at Marseilles. Unfortunately, by a fire which consumed nearly all my letters at Paris (confined to the upper drawer of my bureau), I lost yours containing the address of your old acquaintance at Nismes. . . . The town pleased me much and had I not been in company, should have been inclined to stop for a month or more. The ruins were exceedingly interesting and still more so at Arles. . . . At 8 o'clock the morning of Jan. 1st, we went on board the steam vessel *Herculaneum* for Genoa. At 2 we went out of port and the next evening at 6 reached the beautiful city of Genoa, where we passed three days seeing its rich palaces and splendid churches. On Monday evening we sailed for Naples in the *Castor*, stopping at Leghorn long enough to run out to Pisa for a sight of its cathedral and leaning tower, and a day at Civita Vecchia, and reached this place on Thursday the 8th. . . . We have already seen the wonders of the buried cities of Pompeii and Herculaneum, and on Saturday climbed up to have a look at the burning crater of Vesuvius. No description can exaggerate the grandeur of its appearance; twice we were obliged to run for fear of the falling fragments of red hot lava which are thrown to a prodigious height in the air. . . .

(*Diary. January 9th, 1846.*)— . . . ride round to the amphitheater at the other border of the town [Pompeii], of immense size

<sup>1</sup> The *Cultivator* (February 1846), 50. Written from Paris, November 14th, 1845.



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—seats for 25,000 persons . . . as we leave the amphitheater the sun sets, we take seats, and amid the adieus of the guides, drive off in the eye of the violet sky over the Gulf of Naples, and the soft moonlight dipping the whole in melted silver, turning now and then to see red bursts of flame and fiery stones leaping out of the crater of Vesuvius. . . .

(*Diary. January 10th, 1846.*)—Up at 7 for Vesuvius. Carriage with . . . three horses . . . as far as the little village above H[erculaneum]. The day beautiful as June along the bays of L[ong] I[sland] Sound. Then we took our mountain guide upon a little shag of a pony and continued through narrow streets and afterward through vineyards and under branches of figtrees up the side of the mountain. As we rise we catch views of the bay and the villages along the border, growing more and more extensive as we rise to where the rough lava of 1819 shows its hideous ridges covering all the ground save one little oasis where stood and yet stands a chapel. Up we toil, Vesuvius growing larger in front, the seams in its side deeper, the smoke thicker and heavier . . . over the low country the villages dot the broad landscape with white and the courier points out the long line of the summer palace of the King under the distant hills and Naples is like a nest of houses dropped into the edge of the water . . . after an hour of rough climbing over the loose pieces of lava we found ourselves on the verge of the old crater. At the left, far down, was the great gorge of the eruption of 1819 . . . perhaps a half mile from where we stood was the cone of the present crater . . . black save where the red lava boiled over the edge or the red masses thrown out of its puffing mouth fell upon the pile. Here, too, the sound of the explosions first became heard—gruff, muttering, heavy sounds succeeded by bursts of fire and the ejection of great red flakes of lava a hundred feet in the air. We follow the edge of the old crater until we arrive at a good crossing place where we strike boldly upon the fissured surface . . . and reach the debris of the crater

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only a few weeks old. Here the guide drew us together and in the thundering of the mountain ordered us to follow him closely and to look up to avoid the falling stones. At this there was some demurral and the idea of dodging the stone throws of Vesuvius with no better dodging ground than the hot and crumbling sulphur and lava upon a steep declivity was no way relishable. But the advance of the guide and courier and one or two of the boldest gave courage and up we scrambled, not without fearful looks at the angry column of fire and smoke, and the thick bursts of lava. Five minutes more and we were scarce seventy feet from the orifice, a little hard but hot level of lava to stand upon. Nearer the cone and just by its edge was a hissing stream of fire keeping the lava constantly in fusion about it. . . . The scene was horrific and not devoid of danger. A hundred feet into the air the wheezing mountain threw the great masses of red lava, bursting as it ascended into a thousand pieces, yet still large enough to come down with successive crashes upon every part of the little cone of cinders. The wind blew the smoke from us and the guide promised to assure us in time, of danger. Once or twice as the mountain gave a louder bellow the alarm was raised among us and off we ran as fast as the rough, hot lava would permit, looking up fearfully at the ten thousand red hot fragments in the sky, nor was courage entire when all fell heavily and safely upon the growing heaps of scorix; but with trembling knees and pale faces we gazed on the successive heavings of the furnace. . . . Withdrawing still farther nearly to the edge of the old crater . . . we found a bed of sulphur still hot and fuming. From this point, eight miles away below upon the plain traced out the few uncovered streets of Pompeii and the mammoth amphitheater; from that distant point of observation forming some estimate of the agency which covered the city in ashes. . . . We turn homeward and coming to the descent half slide, half creep, a thousand and more of feet down the side of the mountain. . . . At 6 o'clock we are at home. . . .

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A letter to Mrs. Goddard written from the Piazza di Grand Duca, Florence, April 23d, 1846, summarizes in a pleasing way about three months of travel:

. . . You see I am at Florence, the most beautiful city of Italy, having left Rome ten days since, after the close of the great ceremonies of Holy Week. Six days were spent on the way traveling by vetturino, in company with three other Americans, one Frenchman, and two Venetians. The country passed over, after leaving the desolate Roman Campagna, was as beautiful as a dream. There was Mont Soracte, and the falls of Terni (*vide* Byron's description), and the Lake Thrasimene (Macaulay), and the vale of Clitumnus (*vide* Byron and Macaulay), and Arezzo, the birthplace of Petrarch, and everywhere sweet, rich, cultivated valleys and fine old castellated towns, and rivers green and clear as emerald, and mountains blue and shadowy as fairyland, and atmosphere that set one sleeping despite the beauty.

But you want to know what I was doing at Rome the three months I was there. First came the Carnival, which filled a week with as much amusement as could be crammed into a week; then St. Peter's, a work for a month's looking; then the Vatican, and the ruins, and the capitol, and the galleries, and the three hundred churches, not one of which but would be a wonder in Connecticut; and occasional study of Italian; and afterward a week's ramble on foot among the Apennines thirty miles from Rome with knapsack and stick and guide; and after that the gorgeous ceremonies of Palm Sunday and Easter, in which more cloth of gold is worn than would clothe every man, woman, and child in your town; and the Miserere performed by the Pope's choir in a way that brings tears and makes one think he hears the hosts of heaven bewailing the event which the occasion commemorates. Then there was the illumination of St. Peter's with 5,000 lamps—2,000 bursting into a flame in a moment and making the sky seem on fire; the evening after, the fire-works, in which among other small combustions,

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6,000 rockets of different colored lights are sent into the sky at one moment. And yet the day after [there] was a balloon ascension in the park of the most beautiful of the Roman villas, in which (the park) were assembled 10 to 12,000 of the men and women of every country of Europe.

Madame de Stael, I believe it is, says that Rome is the drawing room of Europe. It is very true, and at the churches and the galleries and the promenades may be seen the pick and the fashion from the family of the Emperor of Russia (whose traveling household consists of the moderate number of two hundred) to the small counts and baronesses from Tuscany and the Rhine; and at the Hotel d'Angleterre where I spent my first week in Rome, one-third were princes, and more than half titled nobility of England, of Russia, of France, and Germany; nor are they too much unlike the rest of the world to escape being talked to: for three days a German baron and myself kept up a rambling conversation in French at the *table d'hôte*, and an Italian count at my room has taught me more Italian than my teacher. And now I jabber in Italian better than in French.

Thirty pages are blackened in my note-book with jottings on my trip in the Apennines and a great many more with Carnival and Holy Week at Rome. You know I had always a sort of wish to lose myself under the great roof of St. Peter's and I have done it. There was no disappointment; but the wonder grew upon me each one of the thirty times that I wandered about it, and now [that] I have left it, it seems vaster than ever. I have seen 6,000 people in it and no more appearance of a crowd than your three children would make trotting up the aisle in your Salem meeting house. Groton Monument might be set down upon the pavement within and not reach the roof, and the spire of the new Trinity at New York, if put under the dome, would not serve for ladder long enough to dust the magnificent mosaics of its panels. To loiter under such ceiling; to hear the Miserere in such a place, and see a thousand soldiers in different uniforms, and sixty cardinals in furs and velvets,

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and the Pope in robes of satin, and his officials in silks, and his guards in the richest uniform of the world, and the stars of every order of nobility, and the insignia of embassy from every court of Europe, and to *feel the presence of the place*—is one of those experiences which may be remembered, but can never be told of.

But here I am—opposite the stern old palace of the Grand Duke that has seen slaughter enough to make the gloomy windows spout blood—and below it the *place*, and the fountains, and the arcades running off to the Arno. . . . It is three o'clock and I must go and have a look at the Cathedral before dinner.

8 o'clock. I have seen it, and it is a glorious old temple; but what can be said after seeing St. Peter's? . . .

However much the young man admired the outward splendor of the exercises of Holy Week, he was not without his own private opinions, some of which he confided to his diary:

(April 5th, 1846.)—Palm Sunday. . . . I found my way home to write this before the crowd left, tired of the inanities of that service which commemorates a great date in the life of the Savior—his entry into Jerusalem. He rode upon an ass; the Pope passes on the shoulders of men on a gilt throne and in gilt robes such as Christ never wore and never will wear till he judges Pope and beggar. It may all be well, this show of the high priest of the Church—who knows? The first temple the Jews built was a rich one and God directed its building, and the Levites wore rich robes and God appointed them. Yet Christ was born in a manger and John the Baptist, who came to tell of him, wore the skins of wild animals. Which is the better, the Levitical or the Christian practice? And what boots either in view of living for the future so as to make that future what each one wishes it may be—happy? Six thousand years are gone, and the rest are going; millions of men are gone to their graves and the rest are going, and there will be an end. And to that end all look forward—some gaily, some

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fearfully, some doubtingly, some carelessly, some frequently, some seldom; but they all look, they all must look; for it will be so near that they can see nothing else except they look back, which they certainly will do, and if they can look back calmly, they can look forward calmly. There will be a great many colors behind to look at; there will be only these two before—white and black. Chemists say all colors well mixed make white; colors badly mixed make black. Who mixes his colors well will then see light behind and light before; who mixes his colors ill, will see blackness behind and blackness before.

From Venice he wrote to Gen. Williams, May 23d, 1846:

You find me under the Austrian flag: five days here and four at Milan I have been under its protection. . . . I am now alone and unless I fall in with some one on the way, shall continue alone. . . . You know that this is a city founded in the water, and as such is exceedingly curious. The splendor, however, is gone by, its nobility ruined, or dependent upon the mercies of Austrian despotism. Its decaying palaces and crushed aristocracy tell a sadder tale of time's changes than can be learned elsewhere in Europe. The Austrian Government is lenient and yet severe: it builds the people churches and theaters, but denies them all offices of trust; it gives them the best of music for their amusement, but denies them all liberty of thought. . . .

. . . it is more difficult to find a proper companion than you would suppose. I have met many [people] who have made me blush for my country. You will have heard with indignation of the decamping of our old consul at Rome, leaving \$3,000 of debt behind him. Our system of consul making and consul paying is a villainous one. Without salary, they are obliged to fleece traveling Americans—many of them poor artists—for a support. And after all, [they] throw shame on the country.

My views in regard to politics are more firmly fixed in the direction heretofore hinted to you. You know me better than to sup-



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pose I would favor the insolence of any particular member of Government. But seen from this distance, there appears a unity of design and purpose in Democratic measures more consistent with our Declaration of Independence and its burthen than in the wavering, various, and merely negative aims of the opposite party. Besides, observations here are convincing as to the fact that the spirit of our Democracy, though it may be somewhat tainted by radicalism, is the progressive spirit of the age and ultimately will be the triumphant one. . . .

(*Diary. June 11th, 1846.*)— . . . Impressions upon the whole of Berlin wholly unfavorable. Its streets less orderly and less beautiful than the better part of American cities; the pavement of the worst description except in the Unterlinden; the trottoirs for the most part formed of the same round, sharp pebbles as the streets; the shops, with the exception of a few of the fancy iron-work and Paris modes and soldiers' equipments, of inferior description; the private mansions low and without any of the magnificence of the Vienna houses; the streets not wearing the same air of bustle and business, and everything betokening the presence of that military supremacy which reigns here to the exclusion of free commercial or free social action. The mirth finds its being in the soirees and operas; the business is centered in parades and the making of epauletry. The days when a Frederick the Great could make a soldier's coat the passport to everything that human vanity and human ambition desire, are gone by. Conquering is done by diplomacy and not by the sword; yet the Prussians, forgetting the lapse of time that has so altered the condition of these things, still wear the scabbard while the sword is gone, and with their martial music, which is the best in the world, and with their military exercise, which is faultless, they honor their greatest monarch by dishonoring themselves. If Prussia was a camp to supply the world with armies, they could do no better; as it is, they could do no worse.



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The 29th of June saw him in Antwerp, his face turned to Paris, his thoughts toward America. The following paragraphs are from an Antwerp letter of June 29th to Gen. Williams:

. . . My route since Venice has lain through Trieste, a bustling commercial town; Vienna, after Paris, the finest city of Europe; Berlin, Prague, Dresden, Hamburg, Bremen, Amsterdam, Haarlem, and Rotterdam. I have made acquaintances along the route, of all nations, and traveled agreeably. I have seen much and I trust improved by the observations made.

. . . It is now the bustling season—everyone traveling, inns and railways full. All tongues are busy with our war and the fall of the English Ministry. I am obliged to defend the best way I can our assumed position with Mexico, which I must say is looked upon very much like a *wolf and lamb* state.

The passing of the Corn Bill is the occasion of rejoicings and illuminations all over Britain and will be to some extent in America. I visited Bremen and Hamburg chiefly from the fact of our growing commercial relations with those countries, and called upon and conversed with the consuls at each. . . .

I had the good fortune to pass Berlin and Leipsic on the occasion of the great Saxon wool market, to which buyers come from every quarter of the world, and as I strolled upon the Bourse at Berlin in my white traveling chapeau, I was addressed by a merchant who had taken me for an English wool buyer. . . . At Vienna I called upon our Minister, Mr. Stiles, and also upon Mr. Norris, of Philadelphia, who has there a large manufactory of locomotives and who kindly showed me over his establishment. . . .

(*Diary. July 3d, 1846.*)— . . . there are . . . very nice German people, as everybody knows, and hard students who fight duels and smoke pipes for recreation; but one does not see this class in traveling, for they are too poor to travel, and it is

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necessary to judge by what one does see—laying aside those with ribbons in their button-holes, who are more than half, and who hold their heads so high that there is no way of a small man's forming an opinion. . . . However, the Germans are a social people; that is to say, a hearty people. It is surprising with what good will they eat their dinners and never mind the small ingenuity of using their fingers for forks or toothpicks. They have energy for grubbing either at Greek roots or a duck bone; for I know the professors do the first, and the man next me at table did the last.

But as for other energy, the energy that prompts to manly independence and self government—they had rather smoke, or eat stewed cherries, or learn Latin than to trouble themselves with it; and here in this town of Frankfort, calling itself a free town—it might as well call itself the sun in the heavens—Austrian and Prussian soldiers are posted at the corners, and they close the gates of the city and fire the guns, while the vigorous and stalwart young men of Frankfort sit before coffee and puff tobacco smoke! What sort of freedom is this? There are nice streets and shops and books to read; but an old idiotic Emperor of Austria, who does not know whether the United States is in North or South America, sends bewhiskered ignoramuses with guns to parade the streets and keep the free people of Frankfort as he chooses they should be kept.

What can the soul of a young man be made of in this nineteenth century, which, when disciplined by study, enlightened by history, and spurred by ambition, can smoke pipes and laugh and crack jokes year after year in the face of such mummary as this? Is it true philosophy to live abased when resistance to the power that debases would be vain? I do not decide for others; but I do know if I were a German some conditions would change themselves, or else I should go to spend some years in the prison of the State.

What a glorious contrast that government of ours! Whatever its defects, and they are many; with all the troubles that insurrection of popular and uneducated wishes may involve us in; with all the disrepute that popular fanaticism may subject us to; there is

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something inexpressibly glorious in the thought of your being equal in exercise of power to your fellow; no bounds to chafe against that you in common with others have not set; no princely hierarchy to throw in the shade by its unreal splendors all that genius and all that patience can accomplish; no ribbons and spurs to supersede homespun, if it be directed by energy; if it be pushed forward with zeal. Think of trying to be [a] diplomatist of original and philosophical design in the face of such a man as Metternich! A man might as well propose a ball in a salon lighted by the sun at noon, in place of having it under the gaslights of night. There is no room for effort; there is no encouragement for exertion. Talent all goes in direct channels to work upon society; poetry goes to Fausts and devils; patient ingenuity to philology; professional endeavor to medicine and the natural sciences; conversation to fashion and scandal. There are no Burkes; there are no Pitts; there are no Peels; there are no Websters in Germany—and when will be? . . .

(*Diary. July 4th, 1846.*)— . . . Hunt two hours for boots—find everything else—eight saddlers—twenty haberdashers—twenty book-shops—two boot shops only, each with three pairs—am directed as a special favor to the best in the town, a court over which hangs a faded painting of a boot—a dirty court in which were two little children playing who ran away up a dirty stairway where I did not dare to follow, so I was obliged to go to Mayence to buy a pair of shoes. Pray, what do the women of Frankfort do? They either make their own shoes, or else they go to Mayence to buy them. . . .

(*Diary. July 10th, 1846.*)—The great and glorious Rhine is no longer a dream land. I half regret it, since the image in my mind was by half more beautiful than the reality. All has now a definitiveness of aspect; the mountains cannot grow higher, the castles richer, the waters purer, as they could before I saw them. But what then? Shall knowledge not be gained, because in possession

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it seems smaller than in anticipation? It still seems great to those who have it not, and they are most; therefore it is great. If I had considered all I have gained in a year, in a mass beforehand, I would have thought it great. Now it seems small, though it is the ability to speak two new languages, the acquaintance with six capitals and six new nations of the world, and the sight of the most glorious works that human art has ever accomplished.

His last letter from Europe was written from the Place du Louvre, Paris, to Gen. Williams, July 28th, 1846:

. . . You may have felt a little anxiety lest I might have been too near the late railway catastrophe. My arrangements brought me over the road just three days after the accident, while they were yet removing the debris of the broken carriages. My feelings at leaving Europe for home are very peculiar. Of course, I have a strong desire once more to see old friends and live over old scenes; but you know, my dear Sir, as well as I can tell you how the rich and strange and varied sights of European life charm the young mind whether of a mere observer, of a pleasure seeker, or of one anxious to gain information on every subject connected with actual life. America is the place to make money; Europe is the place to spend it. America is the place for a poor man; but Europe is eminently the place for a rich one.

There are, however, other objects in this life of ours besides making money, and besides spending, and that is what the European is too apt to forget. There is no ground for his ambition to work upon; there is no field open for his enterprise, and it is this favorable contrast for our country that annihilates my regret at leaving Europe. I could have wished to have seen and learned more abroad; but I shall have the satisfaction of knowing more than many, and what is better of knowing enough, if properly used, to be of influence at home. . . .

I hope to find you well and as comfortably situated as when I left. It is very hard to realize that in forty or fifty days I shall be

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looking on the scenes amid which I was born. Life has been to me for two years such a succession of changes that it seems to me as if life always would be but the succession continued, nothing certain and positive in it except the great change at the end. . . .

He bought his last note-book at Paris on the 15th of July, and began the entries with the following:

Probably my last book, and this, if filled, must be filled with reflections on what has been already seen, or with passages on water; if taken by a privateer, it might make a rich volume. These little books, of which this is No. 5, in prices and character typify the nations of whom they were bought. The first, stout English, good paper, good binding, and a price not too high, firm, substantial, and no trickery. The second, from Geneva, shows imitation of the English, but at a distance; paper and binding gross, but price fair. The Genevese try to do well and are gaining by trying. The third is Roman; as such is just fifty years behind the age. One would have found such books in Paternoster Row in the year of our Lord 1796. The price moderate, because of a class not so often sold at Rome as to be allied with Italian trickery; that is to say, the Italians are taught by the demands of strangers to cheat, and what is not subject to strangers' demands is not subject to cheater; and that cheater is only a habitude like washing the face in the morning, and which the Italian thinks infinitely more harmless. The fourth was bought at Berlin, where people do not write, but play on the fife. It is not ruled; not because there are no rulers, but because the rulers are military rulers who rule men's thoughts before they are put in books, and not men's books before they put down thoughts.<sup>1</sup> It was not high, because a sale is rare and the demand small. The fifth is this, between the English and Geneva, but older than both, showing that the propor-

<sup>1</sup> "The best book that could be found in Berlin. The capital of one of the largest powers of Europe, and no ruled blank-book to be found in it! To five shops I went, but without success." (*Diary*. June 12th, 1846.)

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tionate demand for such things is less at Paris than at either Geneva or Liverpool. It was inordinately high, in conformance with the uniform and principled trickery of the French shopkeepers, who, if they did not cheat strangers and could not detect strangers to cheat would be as good as no shopkeepers at all, and not fit to walk the boulevards Sunday afternoons, or to say mass at San Roque. But adieu, all of you! My next will not smell of the Mersey at low tide, nor of the glacier water of the Rhone at Geneva, nor scent of the Corso in the Eternal City, nor of the camp-fighters of the city of Frederick the Great, nor of the cosmetics of the city of cosmetics in thought and cosmetics in action; but of the fragrance of a country beyond the water, fresh because new; but growing great, and growing great so fast that ten to one I may be cheated worse on the Schuykill or in Broadway than on the Unterlinden or Rue de la Paix.

On the afternoon of August 2d, 1846, he left Havre on the sail-vessel *Burgundy*, with only three cabin passengers in addition to himself. "Now," he recorded in his note-book that evening, "I felt really for the first time bound for home. Europe with all its strange and attractive sights was indeed left. Again I was to live in what was to me the old world of business and of soberness. A bright two years have gone by in a wonderful world of which the recollection will haunt me forever and possibly some day draw me back to it. I am sure I shall wish it. Venerable old Europe, with its companies of nations, its relics of ages, its memories of battles, its fountains of literature, its treasures of art! Who can help loving it? Who can help wishing to wander over its scenes of glorious story, and having wandered over them once, who can help feeling a new sort of fellowship that will make his heart yearn even as toward a departed friend? I know I shall dream of the Coliseum, and night-walks around the



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column of Antoninus and the Arch of Titus, and the fire like a red streak of the sky lifting out of Vesuvius at night, and the blue glaciers of Chamouni. And the little inns among the Apennines will scatter themselves over the surface of whole years of recollection like the lighthouses and headlands that stand out of the water longest in putting to sea. Spite of its troubles and vices, who that has been there can help loving Europe? And who does not like going home? And so, between some passing regrets at leaving the Old World, and bright hopes and wishes and expectations to find again the New, I snuff up the west wind and the salt air with a cheerful spirit."

Elsewhere he has told how he watched the fading shores of France "until the night stooped down and covered them. With morning came Sky and Ocean. And this petted eye which had rioted in the indulgence of new scenes each day, for years, was now starved in the close-built dungeon of a ship—with nothing but Sky and Ocean. Week followed week—still nothing but Sky and Ocean:—before us—behind us—around us—nothing but Sky and Ocean. But—thanks to this quick-working memory—through the livelong days and the wakeful nights my fancy was busy with pictures of countries and the images of nations. Yet ever, through it all . . . the burden of my most anxious thought was drifting like a seabound river—homeward." <sup>1</sup>

The voyage was long. Donald relieved the tedium by observing closely everything and everybody on the vessel, by filling his note-book with sketches for later revision, by reading, by preparing a number of articles for the *American Review*, and—when the tedium overcame and rough weather drove him to the shelter of his berth—by wandering in fancy

<sup>1</sup> *Fresh Gleanings*, 399.



among the strange and brilliant scenes which he had left behind, or treading once more his favorite paths in Elmgrove valley. Once the captain entertained the four cabin passengers with a story of a man lost overboard, which found its way into Donald's note-book and later formed one of the most effective portions of the *Reveries*.<sup>1</sup> The note-book contains, also, the information that on the 19th of August Donald caught a butterfly; "but," he observed, "it was doubtless born on board." It led the mind beyond seas, however, wherever its birthplace! "Even it," continues the entry, "proves a diversion and leads our discourse into the country beside running waters and under cool trees. I never shall shake off my love for the country; but shall now with arms open [go] toward her, and meet her features and gaze on them as on a mother, for she has been a mother to me in the rich consolations she has afforded. If a man could only throw aside this ungainly ambition which like a giant controls his finer resolves, how might he not luxuriate in the kingly pleasures of country retirement!" Lack of exercise was keenly felt. "I never could live without exercise," runs an entry (August 21st); "the country for me!"

At length the slow days brought the *Burgundy* near to American shores, and as Donald realized that soon he would be greeting old scenes and old friends, that strange aloofness which marked his nature—a peculiar compound of shyness, sensitiveness, and timidity—began to rise to the surface of his consciousness. It is a state of mind that can be fully understood only by those to whom it belongs by nature. Under date of September 9th—two days before reaching port—this entry occurs in the note-book:

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 175-178.

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. . . A stern Northeaster . . . blows us on; but ah! it brings to my mind for the first time those cruel New England winds which for two years now I have not felt. They bring up cheerful images of firesides at home; but they bring up also visions of colds, sickness, and death. Our climate is the nursery of sickness. I fear I will have to leave it, even without the further trial of a single winter! —In the evening of last night I dreamed of home, and the dream, true to all human hopes, disappointed my expectations. I found friends not looking as well as I had hoped, and not so glad to see me as I had hoped, and even the scenes in nature which had been dreamland to me for two long years seemed to lose their charms as they opened up to the bodily eye. It was as if autumn had overtaken summer in the middle and the paths were filled with withered leaves; the summer birds and summer flies,

Τὸν λόλον ἃ λαλόεσσα, τὸν εὔπτερον ἃ πτερόεσσα,  
Τὸν ξένον ἃ ξεῖνα, τὸν θερινὸν θερινά—

Fellow prattlers, wingéd both, both visitants together, had taken their departure. None but croakers of the falling year stirred among the branches; decay had stamped its sickly look upon the flowers, and the perfumes were dying perfumes. Harsh winds sighed and whistled, and there were doors off their hinges that slammed in the sad currents. Rust had gathered on my cherished fowling-pieces, and mould and dust accumulated thick on the volumes I had been used to read with so much delight. Even the door of the chamber opened with a sad creak. They had lighted fires within, for there was not warmth enough in heaven's sun. Even my old dog, Carlo, had forgotten me, and when I called him to me in the same way I used to do, he wagged his tail as if with sympathy; but slunk away—and he ran away frolicking to another voice that I did not know. At this last proof of change, I dreamed I threw myself in[to] my old chair and in the bitterness of my thoughts cried like a child! Heaven grant these things be not so! Yet such is this world and all its hopes!

## EUROPE

On September 11th, 1846, after a voyage of forty days—the longest he was ever to experience—he stepped ashore in New York. “Shall I say,” he wrote in his note-book that evening, “what struck me most by force of contrast with what I had left? It was . . . the incivility of the porters and cabmen; the lack of order; the poor and dirty pavements; the low and meager houses; and even Trinity, when we were against it, seemed nothing. But this will wear off.” He had left America almost two years before, a provincial—an educated provincial, it is true; but a provincial, none the less. He was now returning with soul expanded and enlarged and spirit aflame with the inspiration caught by contact with the Old World civilization. From a state of semi-invalidism he had passed to one of comparatively firm health. Yet a young man—but recently turned of twenty-four—with such expansion of soul and restoration of health, he turned to face the problems and the duties of the future.



## THE UNSETTLED YEARS



## VI

### LAW AND LITERATURE

The last scene of summer changes now to the cobwebbed ceiling of an attorney's office. Books of law, scattered ingloriously at your elbow, speak dully to the flush of your vanities. You are seated at your side desk, where you have wrought at those heavy, mechanic labors of drafting which go before a knowledge of your craft.—*Dream Life*, 190-191.

I have no vulgar ambition, I trust, merely to be the author of a book; had far rather never be heard of, than be the author of a poor book. Still, have a most worrisome ambition to be the author of a good one.—D. G. M. in letter to his uncle, Walter Mitchell (1845).

No sooner had Donald arrived in America than the question of what to do became insistent. It had long been troubling him. While yet in college he began to foresee that his uncertain health would probably make it impossible for him to follow the plans and ambitions which he most cherished. The problem pursued him across the Atlantic. "Kind wishes follow me, I am vain enough to feel, as these six letters on my table by last steamer testify," he wrote from Liverpool to Gen. Williams (January 24th, 1845). "But there is this drawback, that they give poignancy to the regrets that I have not health for the fulfillment of every reasonable desire; and cannot pluck courageously old Father Time by the forelock while he is present." Over and over the vexing question revolved itself in his mind. "What my pursuit will be in the event of an early return is . . . un-



certain," he wrote to Mrs. Goddard from Jersey (March 20th, 1845). "All intentions toward a profession will be given up. Business and a farming life—but not at Salem—will divide the suffrages. If a good opportunity to enter business offered, I should undoubtedly lay hold of it; or, on the other hand, if I was in possession of a good farm near town, or could make a good purchase, my decision would fall that way. In either case, previous habits would forbid my forgetting that the English language is read from left to right, and that writing characters belong to it, as well as the italics." Four days later he was writing to Gen. Williams on the same subject: "Of my course after returning it is impossible to speak with any certainty. Thoughts of a profession will have to be abandoned, or else all hopes of health; in such dilemma, I think it will be my duty to abandon the profession. Business and farming will remain to divide my opinions. The last is almost a guaranty of health; the first a doubtful promiser. My own yearnings are for a country life, and much as I have seen in England of the splendor of professional attainments and the magnificence of commercial enterprise, I have seen still more to fasten upon me the love of country beauties and enjoyments. If I should pursue business it would be out of regard to the wishes of friends and in the hope of rendering any pecuniary successes which might be attained subsidiary to those employments which lie nearest my heart." And again on the 16th of April he addressed Gen. Williams: "You do not speak of my proposal to sell the farm at Salem. I must not think of amusing myself there again. I want future employment, whatever it be, to *count* on the resources of after life. I feel much as if I had been dilly-dallying for years, and as if it were time to act."

Moods of depression frequently came over him, rendering decision still more difficult and paralyzing the desire for action. When the news of Lucretia's death reached him in Jersey, he grew despondent. "My cough has not returned since crossing the Channel," he wrote to Gen. Williams (February 23d, 1845), "but I never shall be able to do a man's work. If I see the age of thirty, it will only be from extremest care and prudence. Life, indeed, has little charms for me; the wish to live to do good is not so distinct as it should be; and all the friends who would have watched my course with affectionate pride, or interest, are gone." Such moods were strengthened by the sense of isolation which he experienced during his absence in Europe. A young man of his temperament needed the understanding sympathy of warm-hearted friends; without it, he had to suffer alone and fall back upon the resources of his own soul. One of his note-book entries during his residence in Paris (November 1st, 1845) gives some notion of the thoughts that too often oppressed him:

All the world intent upon their peculiar business. I alone without it! When, when will it be otherwise? Here am I this Saturday night, alone, worrying myself with thoughts about the future--the deep, the sure, the swift-coming, the all-swallowing future. In the gayest capital of the world, with all around me so gay that vice is bliss, and suffering conquered, and life a fête, and smiles everywhere, and tears nowhere, I am alone sad--not a brooding sadness; but a sadness occasioned by thoughts of opportunities misimproved, and most of all, ambition ungratified. Oh! if I had only friends to chide inaction as a *mother* or a *father* or a *sister* might do it; to applaud conquests of difficulties as they only could do it, my life might possibly be different, and my actions sometime tell the story of my life. As it is, the future of that life is like a

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book tight-closed, with leaves tight-pressed together. It will require energy and strength to lift them, and when turned over they may turn out after all but blank pages. Heaven grant it be not so!

As he studied himself more carefully he came to see that in all probability his future course would need to be determined in some degree by the necessities of his nature. He was beginning to understand that his character was attaining permanence, and he was finding in it quite enough to occasion dissatisfaction. "I do not believe many men live who could content themselves alone so well as I," he wrote to Gen. Williams from Sheffield, England (July 3d, 1845). And in response to some remonstrance of his guardian upon his backwardness, he could only reply (July 15th, 1845): "I regret more on friends' account than my own, a native indisposition and unfitness for society. . . . I am, I fear, too old to change my course of life." In discussing the subject with his uncle, Walter Mitchell, he analyzed his nature more fully. "Gen. Williams," he wrote (July 14th? 1845), "is almost resentful of my neglect to push myself into society, and you will regret it as much as he. There seems to lie upon me native repugnance and native disqualification for polite intercourse. Not that I deem myself boorish in tastes or in sentiment; but wholly inapt for those outward forms which fashion has decided should be the representatives of a gentleman. I wish I could overcome my weakness and my unfitness for my friends' sake, more than my own. You well know my early separation from home, and my continued separation from all the charms of a social life; and I fear it may have an influence upon my future life which will require a prodigious and constant exertion to counteract. If my tour had been made as one of a party—in all whose

schemes of pleasure I must necessarily have participated—it would have helped me to such exertion wonderfully; and the falling in with such party might retrieve past errors. You will give me credit for frankness in thus putting the knife to my own gangrene.” Sometimes he was unsparing—almost unmerciful—in self-analysis and self-portraiture, though in all likelihood rather enjoying the ludicrous quality of his characterization. “And now,” he wrote from Jersey to Mrs. Goddard (March 20th, 1845), “would you really have me come back, and—to Salem? What! that strange, unmannerly, unsocial, unfeeling, heartless, and tongueless toad squat again in your west chamber!”

The call of Salem—whose memories had followed him along every mile of European travel—was too strong to be resisted; the old scenes must needs be revisited, the old paths trodden again, the final separation postponed. After arriving in New York, he lingered only a few days in the city with friends, and then hurried to Salem, where he resumed his old quarters up-stairs in the west chamber of Elmgrove house. There during the autumn evenings he found eager listeners to his accounts of travel and adventure. Shortly after his return to Elmgrove he suffered an attack of measles which made it necessary for him to remain until his recovery was complete. Doubtless he was not sorry for the opportunity of prolonging his stay and of considering more deliberately what course he should follow.

At length, spurred by the necessity of seeking a milder climate, he decided to turn southward and to spend at least a part of the winter in Washington, D. C. He was moved to this step still more perhaps by the desire to see at first hand the workings of our governmental machinery, toward which he had long felt a secret, though powerful, inclination.

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Doubtless, also, he intended to make an effort to overcome his "native indisposition to society" by entering actively into the gaieties of Washington's social season. Evidently, he was soon, in every way, disillusioned. The Washington of the forties could not but seem tame and crude to the young man fresh from the large capitals of Europe. Indeed, the capital of our nation was then primitive and uninviting. Reflections of those early days have found humorous record in the pages of *American Notes* and *Martin Chuzzlewit*; in fact, Dickens's visit to Washington preceded Mitchell's by only four years, and judging by Donald's letters and articles, Dickens's descriptions were not far from the truth. Under date of December 10th, 1846, he was writing to Mary Goddard after this fashion:

So, Mary, I am here, and thoroughly disgusted with Washington—with its hotels—its buildings—its streets—its shops—its barbers—its hack-drivers—its railways—its people—its weather—its comforts—its society—its charges—its talk—its fashions—its changes—its novelties—its antiquities—its bustle—its rowdyism, and its life; and if I had not determined beforehand to survive a month of it *nolens volens*, I would take the cars to-morrow for Richmond. I was never so thoroughly disgusted with any place in my life. Salem is a paradise beside it. Your roast mutton and macaroni were better than my dinner and breakfast together here at Gadsby's; and as for society, why, old Mr. Tiffany would figure as a Beau Brummel beside some old fellows that were at table to-day, and as for young bloods, Lafayette Latimer or Tim Avery could set the fashions if they were to stand in the doors of the tailors' shops along Pennsylvania Avenue; and if there are any *old* unmarried women of your acquaintance, send them to Washington, tell them to hang a red and white plume in their hats, and sit in the gallery of the House two days in the week, and they will be belles, and like enough before the session is over, utterly married.

*Saturday night*, Gadsby's Hotel.—I was never so homesick in my life, not in the most distant quarter of Europe, in Ireland, or Jersey, or Austria, or Prussia, whether alone or with companies, I never felt the sensation of loneliness so strong as here. I eat at table with forty, not one of whom I know, and most of whom I would not if I could; I go into the reading room and there are a parcel of vulgar fellows smoking. There is no place to fall back upon. If I go to another hotel, it is worse. In short, I am driven to my room and driven to this stupid sort of writing.

Last evening I attended one of the President's levees; talked some five minutes with Mrs. Polk, who is a pleasant sort of a lady; chatted also with the belle of the house, Mrs. Walker, the wife of the private secretary. The beauties were few; plenty of great men, though not much greater than other people, after all. I determined to-day, once, to pack my trunk, to run down to Charleston, and to return thence to New York; but I was afraid of being laughed at if I could not stop in Washington five days without being so disgusted as to run away.

You ask whom I know as yet. Let me see: there is Don Alvra, son of the Ambassador for the Argentine Republics; a son of Gov. Cass; half a dozen members; Mons. Stakkel, Secretary, Russian Legation. . . . But it is doubtful if I do not lose my ballast again before to-morrow is passed by, and start for the south on Monday morning. . . .

On the 14th of December he left Gadsby's Hotel and began living at the boarding-house of a Miss Ulrich, whose establishment in 15th Street at the corner of F, immediately opposite the Treasury Department, was in those days much esteemed. There he came in contact with more congenial company. Among members of Congress who boarded there were John A. Rockwell, a native of Norwich, Connecticut; William W. Campbell, later a justice of the supreme court of New York; Henry J. Seaman, of Staten Island; and William



Wright, of Newark, New Jersey. John Osborne Sargent, the well-known New York attorney, and Lewis Cass, Jr., afterward minister to Rome, were also there. The diplomatic service was represented by M. Stoeckle, then secretary of the Russian Embassy, later a baron and himself ambassador; Chevalier Testa, minister from Holland; and one or two from the legation of the Argentine Republic. With all of these Mr. Mitchell formed acquaintance, and through their influence came to a good knowledge of life at the capital. With such companionship he overcame his repugnance for Washington sufficiently to prolong his stay for almost two months.

In addition to other literary work—he was busy with articles for the *American Review*—he found time to write for the New York *Courier and Enquirer* a series of lightly satirical “Capitol Sketches,” which were greatly enjoyed by the reading public and which were extensively reprinted in other papers. Perhaps the most interesting feature in connection with these “Sketches” is the fact that they were the first of Mr. Mitchell’s writings to appear over the signature “Ik Marvel.” For several months he had been seeking a suitable pen-name, the two names “Caius” and “Ik Marvel” occurring to him, as it seems, about the same time, and for a while being used concurrently. The Marvel pseudonym appeared for the first time at the close of his initial Washington letter, December 10th, 1846, and was printed “JK. Marvel.” This error, occasioned by the typesetter’s mistaking Mr. Mitchell’s “I” for “J,” was promptly corrected, and in subsequent letters the pseudonym was printed properly. For a long time, however, a period was used after the “Ik”; and sometimes the name was printed “Ike.” Ultimately the signature established itself as “Ik Marvel.”



Some have wondered why Mr. Mitchell chose this pen-name. He used to say that he had forgotten the circumstances which led to its selection; he believed its brevity and attractiveness had been the chief considerations. There can be little doubt, however, in the minds of those who know his fondness for Izaak Walton and Andrew Marvell that consciously or unconsciously—perhaps by inspiration—the names of those two old worthies united in Mr. Mitchell's mind to form one of the world's most widely known and best-loved pseudonyms.

As the weeks passed, love for Washington did not grow upon him. Portions of two letters to Mary Goddard show clearly his state of mind during those weeks, and with what difficulty he was working toward a decision as to his future course of action:

(WASHINGTON, *Jan.* 2d, 1847.)—A happy New Year to you, Mary; nor have I suffered your letter to "Mr. Mitchell" to remain unanswered so long as mine. Did you really think I did not like Washington because it was an American city? Perhaps I did not tell you as I might have done that Philadelphia I liked as *much* as Washington *little*. . . . I shall probably take a run down to Charleston before going back, having half made an engagement to that effect with Chev[alier] Testa, the Dutch Minister.

Washington still seems dull to me, though gay to most. I sometimes wish I loved society more, but it seems as if I were too old to change. My acquaintances thus far are Mr. and Mrs. Dixon of Hartford, Mrs. Miller of New York, Mr. and Mrs. Ames (of the newspaper *Union*), Mr. Marsh and wife and wife's sister, with whom I called yesterday upon the President and half a dozen high functionaries. They, by the way, are very pleasant people (the Marshes), Mr. Marsh a thorough scholar, has splendid library and fine old engravings, and what is more, drinks excellent wine

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and gives good dinners. Mrs. Marsh is, as you know, a scholar herself, and only three days ago I had an argument with her on studying Greek, which, however, I do her the credit of saying, she does not know; but speaks French and German, and reads Spanish and Italian. She is a pretty woman and so is the sister. I have also taken one capital dinner with a Mr. Johnston, the literary editor of the *Intelligencer*. In short, Mary, if I could only make up my mind to be impudent, unhesitatingly impudent, drop my card at all of the foreign Ministers (a thing most common), I should find myself, I dare say, charmed with Washington. But how can I? . . . What say you to my going back to Europe in the spring for two years' study at Leipsic?

Nay, now, don't cry out that it is nonsense, though I've not decided. If my health is as good, I shall commence studying either in Norwich, New York, or Europe, and I shall call myself thenceforth a *Democrat*. Another outcry! My convictions are strong on those points. There is no sort of question but there is more unity, more entireness, more liberality in the Democratic party than with the Whigs. And, as I have always said, the measures of the party are more definite, and more in unison with the Republican character of the Government. Moreover, the Whig party is more led by demagogues, the Democratic party by men of weight of character; but this is all useless. You say nobody will marry me in Connecticut. To tell the truth, I have thrown marriage out of my mind; my pride will prevent my marrying until I have a reputation with which to secure a wife, and it will take about six years of good health to make to myself a reputation fit to marry with.

If I live ten years with good health, I mean to be in Congress. You say my head is turned topsy-turvy; I am inclined to think so on rereading the last clause. But I have never suffered more from despondency than here at Washington, from the fact of the noise and gaiety in which I could make no part. Pray tell me how shall I learn to love this gay life better, to talk nonsense with the women?

## LAW AND LITERATURE

Do you suppose I can do it? Do you suppose I can learn to make myself agreeable? Then tell me how. I have a curiosity to try it. . . .

I enclose some letters for your private reading from *Courier and Enquirer*. I do not wish it known that I write them. My publication of book is more and more dubious. I write an article on landscape gardening for Colton's March number [of the *American Review*]. Tell me what you think, what is thought, of "Boldo's Story." Colton says it is the best thing I have published; certainly it is the most original and striking. . . . Kiss all the children for me and write me as soon as possible; that is to say, immediately. . . .

(WASHINGTON, Jan. 28th, 1847.)—Your favor of a week or more since was duly received. Ten thousand things, good reasons and bad, have prevented my replying before. I attended last evening a party at the Spanish Minister's, at which were present all the diplomatic corps, and all the elite of Washington. The Spanish Minister's lady is Scotch, and of high birth and most diverse accomplishments; among others is an authoress and a good one, speaks four languages, plays upon the harp, piano, and sings, &c. Among others present were Mr. and Mrs. Webster, Mr. and Mrs. N. P. Willis (with the latter I had a long and pleasant chat), the British Minister, Prof. Silliman, Jr., Dr Woods, President of Bowdoin College, &c., &c. So you see I peep now and then upon the world.

The "Capitol Sketches," which you did not like, are exciting more attention than any series of letters for some time. There is great curiosity to find out the writer; as yet, he is not known at all. I have been questioned myself by several ladies, but have uniformly evaded or denied it. So keep *dark* at home. When I say I wish a thing kept secret, you know I mean it. Col. Webb, the editor, is in the city and has been questioned repeatedly. He says (justly) he did not know, but that he would write to ascertain. I have,

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however, anonymously given him a hint to guard the secret. They have been copied into papers in all parts: this not in boasting, since they are not things I am proud of; it only shows I have taken the right manner to hit popular wishes. My reputation through the "Notes by the Road" [published in the *American Review*] is far greater than I had any reason to hope for; and I have come to be stigmatized as a literary man—a name I do not covet.

Mrs. Marsh's is yet one of my most pleasant visiting places. I have dined with them twice and had most capital dinners with plenty of most excellent wines. . . . By the way, speaking of dinners, you would have been surprised to see me dining a week since, in a private way, with the editor of the *Union* and Mr. O'Sullivan, the late editor of the *Democratic Review*! A rare trio, was it not? But we did not talk politics, and the lady of the editor is a most agreeable bride. My acquaintance is still limited, but select so far as it goes. I dine beside the Dutch Minister every day, and we chat together exclusively in Italian, as he speaks English imperfectly.

I still have in mind to go South before returning. My ideas still lean toward passing the summer with you at Norwich. Events will determine if I shall do it. I am sorry my farm is not sold. Mr. Lewis, of New London, is here (Charles), and a very pleasant man I find him. He dissuades me from attempting a profession. So far as support goes, there is to my mind no doubt, now, that my pen would do it; but it is a dog's life, and as you love me, never speak of me as a literary man. It shall be an amusement to me always; a business, never. I hear little or nothing of friends at Hartford. In their last they wanted to know if my traveling sketches were in a newspaper or magazine! In reply, I sent them a copy of the *National Intelligencer*, one of which I sent you. If I make my way in the world, it will be in spite of them. And if I live and have health, I *will* make my way. Thus much of sad egotism; but pardon it, for I think you will read it with mercy.

Tell me now what you all are doing. How comes on Alf at his

school? How is Julia, and what is she doing, these long evenings—reading Jack the Giant Killer—or has she read “Boldo’s Story”? (pray, what do you think of it?) I may safely say it is liked here. . . .

It must have been very soon after the date of this last letter that he left Washington for the South. The journey afforded him an opportunity to gain further knowledge of the sentiment in regard to the war with Mexico. His knowledge of the struggle was already extensive. From the vantage-point of Europe he had followed with intense interest the events which preceded it. The battle of Palo Alto was fought May 8th, 1846, four months before his return from abroad. For three months he observed the war sentiment in New England, and for three more followed the conduct of the struggle at the seat of government. Now, as he passed through Wilmington, North Carolina, he saw troops gathering for service, and at first hand learned the attitude of the South.

Not many details of this Southern journey remain. We do know that he formed valuable friendships in Charleston, and that he went on to Savannah, Macon, and other points in Georgia. One incident of the journey came in after years to have unusual interest for him. “It is a curious fact,” he wrote about 1898, “that at Charleston I delivered a letter of introduction from Mr. Chambers, of Chambersburg, Maryland, to Alston Hayne, Esq., who lived directly opposite the old Pringle house. Alston Hayne was out of town; but I was received very courteously by his brother, Dr. Arthur Hayne, who invited me to join him in going to a large reception that evening. I was provided only with travel wardrobe and declined. The *curious* part of this is that directly opposite the office of Arthur Hayne was the home of the Pringles,

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and as I stood talking with Dr. Hayne at leaving, a carriage drove away from the opposite house with two young ladies, to one of whom I was married just six years later, though I did not meet them until the summer of 1852."

About the middle of March he returned to Norwich for a brief visit, and later went on to New York City. In the meantime he had determined to venture upon the publication of a first book, an enterprise which he had been contemplating, as we have seen, with a great deal of hesitation. The notion of such publication had undoubtedly occurred to him very soon after he reached England in 1844, and had been strongly confirmed by the encouragement of his uncle, Walter Mitchell. "You suggest," he wrote to his uncle (July 14th? 1845), "a source of pecuniary profit in authorship. I fear that such an issue of such pursuit would be extremely doubtful. It is by no means the first time the plan has been in my mind. My ambition is of a sort that keeps me and always has kept me in a fever of desire. But unfortunately it is of the '*aut Cæsar, aut nihil*' kind. I never look forward to any third or fourth place with any complacency. Hence, in proposing to myself any publication of personal observations I have great misgivings that such may fall short of public approval. My ambition is too strong for my abilities and like Richard III 'o'erleaps itself.' I always had most confidence in myself for public speaking as a ground of future reputation. My health for the present, however, will forbid all effort that way. It was to this end all my studies in college were directed. I have thus far taken brief note of my observations through the progress of my travels, making a word, as far as possible, the exponent of a scene. I endeavor to seize upon those points which will be most valuable to me as an American and which would be



most eagerly listened to by American ears. The time for amassing mere statistical knowledge has gone by; geographers and gazeteers have monopolized the business. It remains for a tourist to catch hold of social and individual peculiarities, to illustrate them by incident, to relieve them by description, and to bind all together with easy and familiar narrative. Have I rightly epitomized the work to be done? and will you subscribe for one or half a dozen copies? But this is joking. I am by no means decided on publishing. I have no vulgar ambition, I trust, merely to be the author of a book; had far rather never be heard of, than be the author of a poor book. Still, have a most worrisome ambition to be the author of a good one. Only promise me success and I will set about reducing my notes to duodecimo; as it is, they lie within my little pocket memoranda, whole pages mummied in a line. You will see some letters of mine over signature of *Don*, in the *Commercial Advertiser* of New York. I should be gratified with your remarks upon them. In the event of publishing, I should like your opinion on this point: should an intended work take the form of familiar letters written in the *currente calamo* vein of these to you, or the more formal dress of sketches? The first would be more in quantity and easier written; the latter less, and require more care. A failing in the first might be retrieved; a failing in the latter would be very discouraging. Should a painter try public favor at first with a cabinet picture, or a pencil sketch?"

During his months of wandering over Europe he had formed some definite notions about authorship. He was sincere in his statements that he did not covet the mere name of literary man, and that he preferred not to be known as a writer unless as the author of a good book.<sup>1</sup> Something of

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 116 and 170 of this biography.



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his conviction he confided to his note-book (July 14th, 1846) during the last days of his residence in Paris:

I begin to think if it will be worth while to publish any notes of travel when I get back. If I thought it would not pay to the full, I would never undertake [it]. Nothing seems to me more humiliating than the state of an author who cannot make a book good enough to pay for his bread. It is a very ludicrous and ridiculous sort of charity which prompts a man to publish his thoughts when the public do not care enough about his thoughts to pay him either for his time or for his trouble. He had much better every way drop his surplus money into the parish poor-box. In that case he may console himself with knowing that no one is pestered with his thoughts and that some poor souls may be stuffing their bellies with his money.

The success of the five instalments of his "Notes by the Road," which appeared in the *American Review* between February 1846 and January 1847, convinced him that an appreciative public awaited his best effort. In the *Review* of December 1846, George H. Colton, the editor, without consulting Mr. Mitchell, had intimated that a book of travel similar to the "Notes by the Road" might soon be expected. "For a narrative of pleasant, minute observations written in a graceful, subdued style, slightly quaint, making the reader an easy-minded companion of the rambling traveler—a style quite new under the prevailing taste for rapid and vigorous writing—we venture to bespeak, we might say predict, beforehand, a most favorable reception," wrote Mr. Colton. "The writer's quick-eyed observations have covered many parts of Europe—the solitary heaths and hills of Scotland—the life led in London and Paris—the quaint and simple forms of things in France and Dutch-land—the ever-great

scenery of the Alps—the scenes and associations, never yet exhausted, of ‘remembered Italy.’ With such things to talk about, and a certain way of telling his story, we do not see why his should not be a ‘proper book.’”

On the 22d of March 1847, Mr. Mitchell addressed the following proposal to Harper and Brothers:

Your attention has been already drawn to a series of papers published in the *American Review* under title of “Notes by the Road.” It is proposed to publish a book of sketches of the same general character. Its title would be

FRAGMENTS OF TRAVEL, (or as known) Notes by the Road  
being  
A NEW SHEAF GLEANED ON OLD GROUND.

τὰ δὲ ἄλλοι οὐ κατελάβοντο, τούτων μνήμην ποιήσομαι.

Herodotus, Lib. vi. cap. 52.

BY CAIUS.

It would relate to the Channel Islands, Paris, the interior of France, Holland, besides containing glimpses of the mountain country of Italy and Hungary. True to the motto, I should endeavor to seize hold of such objects of interest as have been overlooked by others, besides attempting to invest subjects of general attractiveness with some new charm. Such occasional legends as might fall in my way would be worked over, and sometimes I might amplify historic chronicle into the semblance of a tale. Of this characteristic you can judge by matter already submitted. I should also endeavor to graft upon the book such observations as might prove of some value to the reader who looked for something more than amusement. . . . In general, I may say there would be a leaning in style to the manner of the later French tourists, as Dumas, Hugo, etc., with an eye to the peculiarities of Sterne. So far of the subject matter and style of treatment.

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As for the book *mechanically*, if I cannot secure its *good* appearance, I am anxious for none. I wish it printed in duodecimo or small octavo, on good paper and with good type, neither to be poorer than in Ticknor's edition of Motherwell, or the late edition of Sargent's sea ballads. I wish also the same sober brown paper binding, and the leaves left uncut. I wish that the various headings (as in chapter given) should be designated by small capitals in the body of the page, and that each opening paragraph should commence with a large capital, as in an early duodecimo edition of Sterne, which if desired can be left at your office. For bulk, I shall not exceed 300 pages, nor fall short of 200.

I wish now to enquire if the Messrs. Harper are willing to publish such a work in such a style, and if so, *how great a percentage they would allow the author upon the retail price, and how soon they could undertake its publication?* As I remain only a few days in the city, the Messrs. Harper would do me a great favor in replying before the evening of Wednesday, the 24th.

On the 24th the Harpers agreed to the proposal, and the memorandum of agreement was signed on the 26th. According to the contract the author was to receive a ten per cent royalty on the retail price. It appears that during the spring of 1847 there was a press of business in the Harper establishment; at any rate, it was not until June 19th that Donald reported progress to Mary Goddard. "My book will not be out for some time yet, perhaps a month," he informed her, "though it is now being printed. I send you a page and proof of title, which, however, will be much changed in appearance. Do not show it, nor talk of the book. Mechanically, it will be handsome." And then follows a sentence which shows that at some time in the interval he had weighed the comparative merits of his two pen-names, and had discarded one. "You will not fancy my adopting the

Ik. Marvel; it is, however, a stroke of policy." The book was published about August 1st under the title *Fresh Gleanings*, with title-page altered from the form first suggested, altered just sufficiently to transform its commonplaceness into distinctiveness. Its dedicatory letter to "M. W. G." was a merited tribute to Mary Goddard which attracted the particular attention of the public on account of its delicate grace and rare style.

*Fresh Gleanings* met with immediate and gratifying success. On the 16th of August Donald informed Mrs. Goddard that it was "well spoken of" and "its sale good." George H. Colton, always Donald's good friend from the days of their association at Yale, printed an enthusiastic notice in the *American Review* (August 1847), which was followed by many other favorable reviews in the leading newspapers and magazines. When the Harper edition was exhausted, a new one from the old plates was issued by Charles Scribner in 1851, Mr. Scribner having in the meantime become Mr. Mitchell's publisher. The book has retained a hold upon public interest and to-day forms the initial volume of the beautiful Edgewood edition of the author's works published in 1907.

August and September of 1847 found Donald lingering in his usual half-busy, half-idle fashion at Saratoga, Richfield, Avon, and Sharon Springs, New York, where as always with eyes keenly observant he was gathering material for the humorous and satirical "Marvel Letters" which, at the instance of Henry J. Raymond, who was mindful of the interest aroused by the "Capitol Sketches," he was contributing to the *New York Courier and Enquirer*. The success of *Fresh Gleanings* did not bring the content for which he was hungering. A restless, dissatisfied mood was upon him.

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The inanities of society vexed him; "at Sharon—a delightful place—but where unfortunately I knew no one . . . the company was just of that aristocratic sort as made me too proud to make advances," he confided to Mary (August 16th). "I am angry with myself," he continued, "for not having made acquaintance with the people at Sharon . . . but dancing, etc., makes up so large a part of the opportunity at these places that I gave up the attack to those who go on in legitimate way. Indeed, candidly, I think I shall settle down after all the flourish of trumpets a fretful old bachelor."

In October, accompanied by his brother Alfred, he visited Niagara Falls, and travelled down the St. Lawrence to Montreal with every one of his senses alert, and in just the mood to be impressed most forcibly by the scenes amidst which he was moving. Those portions of *Dream Life* in which he describes this northern scenery are the fine flowering of this autumn journey.<sup>1</sup>

Literary work and random travel, however alluring and engrossing, were not conducive to serious professional study, and all the time a conviction haunted him that he should be engaged in some such study with a view to future permanent employment. He never, it appears, seriously considered literature as a life-work. Subsequent developments emphasized the firmness of his resolve that for him literature should be always an amusement, never a business. Continued uncertainty of health and an inability to decide upon a profession delayed his plans. It appears, however, in a letter to Mary Goddard, that by June 19th, 1847 he had decided pretty definitely upon law. It is certain that upon his return from his northern journey, he began the study of law in

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 157-160, and 162-165.

the Wall Street office of John Osborne Sargent, whose acquaintance he had made in Washington. A classmate of Oliver Wendell Holmes, Mr. Sargent was the valedictorian of Harvard's class of 1830. He was eleven years the senior of Mr. Mitchell, a man of good judgment and great ability, with an interest in literature and journalism that must have made the two very congenial. He had been an associate editor of the *Courier and Enquirer* from 1834 to 1841; in 1848 was in charge of the *Battery*, a Washington journal that championed the cause of Zachary Taylor for the presidency; and subsequently became one of the founders of the *Republic*. Mr. Sargent should also be remembered as the legal representative of John Ericsson, inventor of the screw propeller and of the celebrated ironclad *Monitor*.

However diligently Donald strove to apply himself to legal study, he was unable to find it sufficiently attractive to call out his best endeavor. Siren voices were ever luring his attention elsewhere, though he strove manfully to resist. "You see," he wrote to Mrs. Goddard (November 21st, 1847), "I am in the same quarters [90 Franklin Street], as uncomfortable and querulous as ever. Pray do not forget your good judgment so much as to advise me to come home before I am yet fairly established. . . . Indeed, I find if I am going to study to any advantage I must give up visiting during the day; and when evening comes, it is either too cold, or a pleasant book is too entertaining, or I [am] too blue for easy chat. It is impossible to be both a man of fashion and a student, and I prefer the last both from native inclination and sense of duty. All your talk of my Broadway promenades falls flat; flatter, indeed, than I could wish when I see so many beautiful faces at every church and have to feel that they are denied to me. Indeed, you scarce know



how strangely friendless it makes me feel to go into church after church here (I have attended three to-day) and play the stranger at each, be shown a seat by the sexton—not one smile to welcome me—not one face that wears familiar looks. I come away feeling like Cain or Ishmael, and half fear that there is something in my nature which will make me an outcast and homeless one all the days of my life. . . . Law looks dull and dismal, and stretches on in a two year reach of dullness before any green thing appears. You do not know how country thoughts steal in upon study and play the very dickens with Blackstone and all the rest. It half seems as if I was made for the country, after all. It is the only pursuit; that is, agriculture, that can ever engross me to the exclusion of all others. I have made no new acquaintances; have visited none; have joined no club; have not shook a friend by the hand since my last writing. I shall hunt up Mrs. Dixon to-morrow, Coke, etc., notwithstanding. I think I have written three letters to your two. I am glad to hear the children missed me; that, then, is a little to redeem the desolate waste of life.”

Notwithstanding his outcast feeling, he enjoyed the companionship of a few congenial souls. Chief among them was George Colton, with whom he passed many hours in the “ramshackle Nassau Street office” of the *American Review*, where, some time in 1844, while assembling material for the first number of that magazine, Colton had read to him from Poe’s manuscript<sup>1</sup> the haunting lines of “The Raven,” and “as he closed with oratorical effect the last refrain, declared with an emphasis that shook the whole mass of his flaxen locks, ‘That is amazing—amazing!’” With such metrical dance in his brain, and with such companions to ramble along

<sup>1</sup> *American Lands and Letters*, 2. 237–238.



the alluring paths of literature, it is not strange that the study of law fretted Donald. How many hours he and Mr. Sargent discussed literature and journalism will doubtless never be known. It would be interesting to learn whether there was any falling off in Sargent's income during the years 1847 and 1848! In the autumn of 1847 Donald was boarding at the establishment of Mrs. Barnes on Fifth Avenue, between 8th and 9th Streets. Among his companions there were Samuel J. Tilden, who was a nephew of Mrs. Barnes, and the Rev. Henry James, wife, and young son, Henry, Jr., then four years old. Surely, during that winter Mrs. Barnes's table was one of interesting contacts!

In addition to the allurements of literature, opportunities for lecturing now began to present themselves, although he was doubtful of his ability to sustain the fatigue of public speaking. A letter of January 17th, 1848, to Mrs. Goddard, reveals pretty clearly the confusions of the winter. "There is nothing new to tell you," he begins. "I have not been very well, and have consulted your Dr. Bulkley. The weather is detestable. I go to Albany next Thursday (Jan'y 27th) where I think I shall remain four or five days. Thence I shall probably go to Norwich by way of Worcester. The *American Review* remains in *statu quo*. I have nearly given up all idea of purchasing any portion, and with it all idea of writing for it. I do not like the present editor.<sup>1</sup> My story of 'The Little Shoe' will appear in *Graham's Magazine* for March. I do not like the idea of writing for such a magazine, but the pay (\$4 per page) was too tempting. I have since had proposals made [to] me by the attorney for *Blackwood* to write a series of American articles for that

<sup>1</sup> George H. Colton had died December 1st, 1847, at the early age of twenty-nine.

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magazine. I think I shall do so, but do not mention it. I shall be glad to have a *romp* at home again, though I shall probably stay but a day or two. If I do not find a tenant for my farm I shall advertise it to be sold at auction. . . . My yearnings still all tend to a country life. I have declined since my last, three invitations to parties and two to dinners, as much, however, from ill-health as any other reason."

A lecture engagement had taken him to Albany, New York. There on the 28th of January he spoke before an audience of about 1,400, meeting with success sufficient to assure him that at any time he desired he had at command another good source of income. The 31st saw him in Norwich, Connecticut, whither the Goddards had removed in the autumn of 1847 and established a home on Sachem Street. After a short visit he returned to New York, but found the old duties as irksome as ever. New distractions arose. The loss of his old tenant increased his desire to sell his Salem farm and relieve himself of all necessity of looking after what he considered an unprofitable investment. Washington was beginning to beckon him again. "It would give me much pleasure to go," he wrote Gen. Williams, "but feel as if business duties should not be yielded for it." Turn whichever way he could, there seemed to be no open road before him. And then, just as the whole situation was growing intolerable to him, the spark of revolution in Europe flamed into fire, and Donald was off to witness the conflagration.

## VII

### PARIS IN REVOLUTION, 1848-1849

I am as far, and farther than ever, from believing that the mere adoption of the republican form is to heal the grievances of the nation. I feel no Brougham-like inclination to set up my cares under their trees of liberty; and am more and more convinced that that little corner of country called, after its strong Saxon nurse, New England (you will excuse in me a little leaning pride of birth-right), is in everything that goes to make happy and contented the great mass of population, the most unmatched piece of earth that the sun shines upon.—Ik Marvel Letter, *Courier and Enquirer*, Sept. 7th, 1848.

Donald's former residence in Paris (1845-1846), during the last years of the Orleans monarchy, had given him the opportunity of familiarizing himself with the conditions of French political life. Louis Philippe, Guizot, Barrot, Thiers, Lamartine, and other leaders, were not strangers to the young New Englander. He had looked upon them with his own eyes, had studied their utterances, and had discussed their policies with the inhabitants of rural France as well as with the denizens of the Paris streets. For the king he came to have a qualified regard. "Louis Philippe," he wrote in 1850, "was not all he should have been, or all that his position and his means would have made it easy for him to be. But Louis Philippe was a man of talents, of perseverance, of system, and of energy . . . and when in princely station there meet us such capacity, such development, and such culture as belonged to the head of the house of Orleans, it

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becomes us to think that they were gained, as they must always be gained, by determined effort.”<sup>1</sup> When, therefore, during the early months of 1848 the news began to arrive from Europe of banquetings, of Louis Philippe’s abdication, of the formation of a provisional government, and the anarchic conditions that followed in its wake, it was not in Donald’s nature, restless and dissatisfied as he then was, to resist such opportunity to witness history in the making.

In the dedicatory letter of *The Battle Summer*, addressed to his college friend, Joseph Few Smith, Donald tells in his own inimitable way the manner of his departure for the scenes of revolution:

You know that in the early spring of 1848 I was immured in the dim office of a city attorney; and that the alarum of the new-born Republicanism of France first came upon my ear under the cob-web tapestry of a lawyer’s salon.

To me, with whom the memories of courts and monarchic splendors were still fresh and green, such sudden news was startling. I tortured my brain with thinking how the prince of cities was now looking—and how the shops—and how the gaiety? I conjured up images of the New Order, and the images dogged me in the street, and at my desk, and made my sleep a nightmare! They blurred the type of Blackstone, and made the mazes of Chitty tenfold greater. The New Statutes were dull, and a dead letter; and the New Practice worse than new. For a while I struggled manfully with my work; but it was a heavy schoolboy task—it was like the knottiest of the Tusculan Questions, with vacation in prospect.

The office was empty one day: I had been breaking ground in Puffendorf—one page—two pages—three pages—dull, very dull, but illumined here and there with a magic illustration of King Louis, or stately poet Lamartine, when on a sudden, as one of these illustrations came in, with the old Palais de Justice in the back-

<sup>1</sup> See *The Lorgnette*, 2.253.

ground, I slammed together the heavy book-lids, saying to myself: Is not the time of Puffendorf, and Grotius, and even amiable, aristocratic Blackstone gone by? And are there not new kingdom-makers, and new law-makers, and new code-makers astir, mustering with all their souls and voices, such measures of Government as will by and by make beacons and maxims? And are not these New-men making and doing and being what the Old-men only wrote of?

Are not those people of France and wide-skirted German-land, lit up by hatred of aggression and love of something better, putting old law and maxim and jurisprudence into the crucible of human right, and heating them over the fire of human feeling, and pouring them into the mould of human judgment, to make up a new casting of Constitutional Order?

And as for the New Practice, is there not a new practice evolving over seas—not very precise, perhaps, about costs and demurrers and bills of exception—but a practice of new-gained rights, new-organized courts, new-made authorities, new-wakened mind—in short, the whole practice, not only of Courts, but of Human Nature, and Passion, and Power?

Are they not acting out over there in France, in the street, in the court, and in the Assembly, palpably and visibly, with their magnificent Labor Organizations, and Omnibus-built barricades, and oratoric strong-words, and bayonet bloody-thrusts, a set of ideas about constitutional liberty, and right to property, and offences criminal, and offenses civil, wider, and newer, and richer than all preached about, in all the pages of all these fusty Latinists?

—And I threw Puffendorf, big as he was, into the corner, and said—I will go and see!

That very evening, under a soft, summer-like, smoky sky of early spring, I set off to bid my few friends adieu. It was an hour or two past midnight when I reached the little town; (you know it—how pretty and how fresh it is!) Not a soul was stirring; the streets were silent; the houses were dark; only a little mingled

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light of moon and stars was playing on the roofs, or dappling the ground that lay under the long lines of elms.

My dog met me with—first, a growl, and then a bound of welcome. I crawled in at a window—groped my way to a chamber, and threw myself half-dressed upon the bed to dream of gay Paris streets.

The birds wakened me. Then came the rich, quick welcome—the glad surprise—the throng of kind inquiries—

The next day I was tramping over the old farm-land; sitting upon the rocks under the familiar trees; drinking from the spring once so grateful in the heats of summer labor.

The morning after, I shook your hand upon your doorstep in Waverley Place: by noon I was on ship-board; and at sunset at anchor off the Hook.

By eight next day I was listening in dreamy reverie to the tug and chorus of the sailors at the windlass—an hour, and the royals were sheeted home—another, and the Highlands of Neversink had sunk, and I was fairly bound for France!

You know now the history of my sudden leave.

It was through a window of Mary Goddard's home on Sachem Street, in "the little town" of Norwich, that he crawled that morning of early spring. And it was over the Salem farmlands that he tramped next day by way of farewell to old times and old scenes. He loved the "rich, quick welcomes," the "glad surprises" that followed upon such sudden irruptions; and it is sure that both the Goddards and the good old Gen. Williams were well surprised on this occasion. During those restless years it seems quite certain that Donald found relief in quick change of scene and in the stimulus of sharp adventure. His sailing was from New York on the Grinnell & Minturn Packet Ship *Prince Albert*, about May 10th, 1848. He arrived in London at three o'clock, Sunday afternoon, June 4th.



He amused himself during a part of the voyage by writing Mary Goddard a letter in diary fashion. "Pray tell me," he began, "what people say of my sudden departure. I daresay many of them will set it down to some speculative enterprise, or government employ. . . . The General was taken so much by surprise at my determination that he had neither arguments to combat it, or suggestions to favor it." As he approached the coast of England another peculiar element of his character began to assert itself; namely, a longing to be back amid scenes among which he had just been living in only a half-contented way. This, too, is a state of mind common to those who possess such a delicately sensitive temperament as belonged to Mr. Mitchell. "To-day June 1st we made the first land," he wrote. "It is as usual on the English coast, rainy; a feeling of half homesickness comes over me even here, but it is too late now to waver. What I shall come back, or when, is wrapped in great uncertainty. . . . I shall remain here (in England) until after the 12th [of June], at which time is to be another great Chartist demonstration, which I fear will be more bloody than the first. After that time I shall probably go to Paris and pass remainder of the summer."

He had somehow found time in the brief interval before sailing to complete arrangements for reporting the progress of events in Paris to the *New York Courier and Enquirer*. He did not, therefore, linger long in England. It was probably not later than June 13th when he arrived in Paris and began immediately to seek out positions nearest to the revolutionary disturbances. During his nine months in Paris he had in all six different places of residence. At first he was quartered in a hotel in Faubourg St. Honoré which he left for lodgings in the Rue du Helder at the corner of the Boule-



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vard des Italiens, where he stayed during the three slaughter days, June 23d, 24th, and 25th; then after brief periods in the old Rue St. Thomas du Louvre, the Rue de Bucy, and the Rue de Seine, he secured permanent quarters at 7 Rue de Tournon, on the south side of the Seine.

Within two weeks after his arrival in Paris the struggle between the executive committee and the assembly had reached a crisis. On the 21st of June the assembly forced the committee to decree the closing of the national workshops, and on the 23d began that sanguinary struggle between the disaffected workmen and the forces of government, which did not entirely close until the 26th. Every detail of the conflict that he could gather by direct observation, or report, appeared in his very interesting letter<sup>1</sup> to the *Courier and Enquirer*. "The four days of June 1848, of which I have . . . given you some account, will henceforth," he wrote, "be cited as one of the terrible epochs in French history. The period has been characterized by the spirit of the revolutions of the last century; and the insurgents, in the sternness of their action and in the blackness of their cruelties have brought to life again the demon spirit of '93."

On the 26th of June he despatched a message to Mary Goddard. "I am writing," he began, "in the midst of dreadful revolution. The report of it will have reached you before this letter, and may have occasioned you some anxiety on my account; nor do I now know, indeed, what will be the end of the matter, or under what circumstances I may be placed at the time this letter is mailed. At present, I am, in common with all the idle residents of Paris, a prisoner—confined to one narrow street of a hundred yards in length. The streets

<sup>1</sup> Published in *Courier and Enquirer*, July 14th, 1848.

are all of them occupied by soldiery, and I see nothing from my window but marches and counter-marches and troops of dragoons and litters of wounded men and hearses. All day yesterday and the day before, cannon and musketry were heard in all directions, nor has it entirely ceased to-day. For a full account of what I am seeing, you must look in the columns of the *Courier*. 29th June. The battle is over, Mary, and I am safe. There has been dreadful work; from 10 to 20,000 killed, and twice as many wounded. Day before yesterday I went over the scene of the slaughter in a throng of soldiers and curious lookers-on. Houses were pillaged and shattered with balls, the pavement red with blood, every window broken, and weeping faces in almost every door. It is to be hoped that the scene will not be renewed, and if so, that I escape as well as before. But do not be in any alarm. My quarter is a very safe one, not very liable to such disturbance and at the same time giving a good view of what is passing in the city. . . . You must excuse my writing a very short and meagre letter by this steamer as I am rendered nervous by the excitement of the time."

He passed a disturbed summer and autumn, but continued very faithfully to report for the *Courier* the ebb and flow of the troublous times. It is interesting to observe how this experience quickened and confirmed his love of quietness, beauty, and order. It was for him a revealing and a confirmation of desires. As the *Prince Albert* proceeded up the Thames in early June, Donald gloried in all the charms of the English landscape. "The country . . . up the Thames is looking delightfully," he wrote to Mrs. Goddard; "all my old country love comes back with it." And as he sat in his room in the Rue du Helder amid the boom of cannon and

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the rattle of musketry during those June days of battle his thoughts, like singing larks, were circling far above the noise of conflict, and longing for green fields and babbling brooks. "I don't know how it is," he confessed to Mary in his letter of June 26th, "but when I get here in the midst of the noise and bustle of Europe, I sigh more than ever for a quiet country home, and determine over and over to enjoy it when I return."

The old first rapture at sight of Paris he could not recall. "You do not know how Paris nowadays differs from the old one," he told Mary (July 1st, 1848); "nothing now of that gaiety—nothing of that liveliness belonging to everything, streets, houses, horses, dogs, women, sunlight, which used to infuse itself into the temper of even so dull a brute as I, and make me forget all about my Saxon lineage and New England education. But I remember both with pride now, seeing as I do so much that is irrational and impracticable entering into the complexion of French character, when there is really any need of serious effort. In short, I have got over much of my old love for the *belle* city, and shall come back (an't you glad?) a little more satisfied with the homespun jacket of New England make. I do not know, indeed, but my love for the world, now seeing it in some of its worst phases, is diminishing in the same proportion (haven't I said as much in this letter before?) So look out for me a little farm where I may gather together my books and chattels, hang up my chamois skin and knapsack together, keep my gun and fishing tackle in order, my pipe ready for occasional service, and so live out my span doing good in such humble way as falls to my allotment. Do you say yes?"

The political events of the summer did not please him. His study of conditions led him to believe that the time for

the formation of an enduring republic was not yet ripe. In his *Courier* letter of July 20th, 1848, he dwelt at length upon his analysis of the situation:

While the lovers of order are strongest, discipline will be maintained at all hazards, however much the aggrieved may trouble, or however loudly they may resent it. With the Communists uppermost, heaven only knows what new state of terrorism might dawn on France! There might be no Hebert, linking atheism to cruelty; and no Murat, strangely conscientious in doing murder; but the notions of a Lagrange and a Prudhon grafted upon the spirit of the June barricades would make a complication of wrong in thought, and wrong in action, that would inevitably shock every feeling of humanity, and trample every dictate of religion under foot.

But an American would be unjust to his origin and privileges, if he had not some consciousness of a sort of moral training which is his by birthright, and which gives him, so to speak, a republican habit; a habit of controlling his desires and impulses; a habit of looking up to those wiser than himself; and a habit of belief that there are some wiser than himself. The French peasant has not enough of moral culture to lay a strong hand upon his own passions; nor does he possess the popular education which would better fit New England boys of fourteen to erect a government for themselves, than the abettors of the insurrection. In France, there is no "schoolmaster abroad." Nor is there in France that firm and active religious sentiment which is no small safeguard to our institutions at home.

A nation that will run as wildly and heedlessly into atheism as the French did under the crazy leading of Chaumette and a renegade German; and again within the year almost, into the worst species of deism, as they did under the guidance of Robespierre, will not be very apt to control its desires when it has power to manifest them. Those who will bow down to a harlot in a white

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robe and call her Reason, will be very apt to bow down to passion when it is throned in their own bosoms, and call it Right.

Nor are the French much changed in religious feeling. Only within the week, M. Prudhon has spoken without rebuke of Christianity as a dogma nearly worn out. Those who do not respect the institutions of heaven will hardly respect those of their own making.

Do not think me monarchic in thus declaring *my firm conviction that the French are at present unfit for a republic*—certainly for one so indulgent, and presuming so much upon the good intentions of its citizens, as our own. They may win fitness for it; but they will not win it by firing at a target, and secreting fusils, and crying, Long life to the Republic! They will not become fit by studying treatises which advocate a dissolution of property; and which excite passion by declaiming about existing misery. They need rather to gain a firm self-denial, a trustfulness in the future that shall not be eternally interrupted by a clamor about a little present hardship; they need a little more of a rigid, old-fashioned, commonsense teaching that shall not so much flatter their vanity as acquaint them with their weakness. They need to cultivate a respect for what is sacred, and a love for what is good. French statesmen should give up treating of unities and indivisibilities; and think more of things possible and practicable. They should leave off acting as if no republic ever existed before, and be content to lend an ear to what other nations may have done.

It should not escape their notice that a country calling itself the United States of America has struggled boldly and bravely up through some sixty-odd years of experience in this same matter of republicanism; never once putting down from its brawny shoulder that same old republican banner on which was written in the beginning, Liberty and Equality! Such experience, it would seem, might offer something worthy of their attention. Surely they might venture upon careful study of our Constitution, and occasional reading of Story. M. Cormenin would thus find his igno-

rance set right, and M. Cormenin would be honored in sitting at the feet of such Gamaliel!

With the exception of three weeks spent in the vineyard region of Bordeaux in company with a college friend, Mr. John Perkins, of Louisiana, he lived continuously in Paris. Nor was he idle. First of all, he applied himself to the *Courier* reporting until the end of the year; his last letter but one, an account of the election of Louis Napoleon Bonaparte to the presidency of France, bearing date of December 28th, 1848. A letter to Mrs. Goddard of November 15th tells of his other activities. "My time I mean to occupy constantly this winter in work of some sort. Chiefest among it, I shall attend law lectures three times a week, agriculture twice a week, physics twice a week, and history twice a week. Aside from this, I shall have more visiting on my hands than usual . . . there are . . . one or two English families whom I shall see often, and shall go frequently to the [United States] Consul's, where I meet very many Parisians, and a very select circle . . . nor do I know how I could gain more, if as much, benefit in any part of the United States, as here. Lectures are to be heard in every branch of science, and in every profession; the language to be gained; the formation of the Government to be noted, &c., &c.; in short, I should consider myself as throwing away advantages if I were to go home this autumn for no other reason than is now apparent. . . . You must not for a moment think that this winter is squandered upon amusements. I am as seriously and thoroughly at work in gaining information and general knowledge as I ever was in my life. I experience the same sense of the loss of time when idling that you remember I used to at home."



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A feature that annoyed him very greatly during almost the entire period of his absence was the scarcity, or late arrival, or entire failure to arrive, of letters from the home friends. His energetic complaints seem humorous enough, now, after the lapse of years; but for him, at that time, alone and surrounded by the dangers of revolution, often ill, and generally in low spirits, the matter was serious. His letters of remonstrance are particularly self-revelatory. "If I were to fall victim of the insurrections," he wrote to Mary (July 14th, 1848), "there would not be one to save me from the terrors of the morgue. You can imagine, then, how much a letter is appreciated, as it is the only link that binds me to the world of acquaintanceship. I am not well, either, and do not go about a great deal. Perhaps it is safer for me. A horrible plot was announced yesterday to have been detected. All the young girls in the neighborhood of the insurgents (at the various boarding schools) were to have been captured and placed upon the barricades to prevent the firing of the troops until the insurgents could mature their plans. It has so frightened the friends of many that the schools are becoming deserted. Paris, too, itself is losing population every day; hundreds and hundreds go every day. It will soon be populated only by insurgents and troops, and the few strangers will stand between the fire. I will go on frightening you unless you write me, and unless you write me long letters. There is no occasion for my writing very long ones, since you find my whereabouts and see what I am seeing every week in the *Courier*. . . . It is as beautiful an afternoon as you can possibly imagine; sky clear, and sun not too hot. Yet the streets are almost deserted, and I never experienced a feeling of greater loneliness in my life. No wonder there should be empty streets where so much blood has been shed within a



month. Two or three times on crossing the Place du Carrousel I have stopped to look at the blood stains—great, black, hideous looking stains at which the dogs come even now and lick and snuffle. Yet they have been washed and scoured every morning for three weeks. They are the stains of that conflict between the guard and the prisoners of which there is some account in my letter by this steamer. Seventy dead bodies were carried off the spot the next morning. It was just under the windows I held when I was last in Paris, 26 St. Thomas du Louvre. Some of the balls struck the house.”

Not having received letters by the 22d of July, Donald grew desperate, and dashed off the following brief note: “Still another steamer, and no letter. I have now been from *home* nearly three months, have *written* six letters besides those to the papers, and *received* one meagre half sheet! Mary, it is rather hard for me to give up what few friends I supposed I had in America; but if driven to it, *I can do it*. You know some old inclinations will favor the task. I shall henceforth look out for friends on this side; and try to forget the other side, so much as to be careless whether you write or not. . . . Of course, you need not expect to hear from me for a long time to come.”

At last, letters began to arrive irregularly. On the 26th of September, however, we find him complaining again. “Your letter of the 29th August came to hand (owing to the unintelligible character of the superscription) some days after its time, a week since. It was marked No. 6, though it is but the fourth I have received from you. I do not know why your letters should have so miscarried; my own have gone regularly, and I have received regularly from other sources. One reason is very likely the indistinctness with which they have been directed. It is true they can read

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English here; but then English must be written with some tolerable plainness, and not as if the letter were going only to New York. All your letters have chased over Paris before finding me, on this very account. . . . You will already have given up seeing me this fall, or if not you may safely do so now. I shall not return till spring, if then. My health is not good; my spirits have not been of the best, to which lack of your letters has not a little contributed. Lately, however, I have grown more careless. My time—partly owing to ill-health, and partly to ill-humor is not so well employed as it might be—and a sort of indifference to things in general is growing upon me, which the neglect of friends at home has had a very nourishing effect upon. . . . We are all looking just now for another revolution; every one is disturbed and frightened. As for myself, I have relapsed as I said into a state of perfect indifference. If I knew the battle were to rage in my own street to-morrow (and I am now in a suspected quarter near the Rue de Seine), I would not leave. Perhaps if I were to have one arm shot off—or head—I should receive a letter of condolence to cheer me. Do not think that the French mails are disturbed—there are no complaints—they carry very punctually all the letters hence—I think they bring very safely all that arrive from America. I am sorry you feel sadly or unpleasantly, but you will be better able to appreciate my feelings now I trust. A letter to you is much less than to me, both from your hearing indirectly every week nearly, and from your being at home while I am an exile. This letter is (I confess it) written sourly, in worst possible humor; but if it had been good humored, it would not have responded honestly to my feelings; as it is, it is their counterpart. I have no apology to make for it, and nothing to add to it.”

The following morning a bundle of letters and papers

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from America reached him. "I have received this morning, Mary, yours of a date previous to that before received," he replied at once. "The letters and the *Sun* have put me in better humor than yesterday. You speak for the first time in your letter of date August 26th of my return, and are curious to know what keeps me here. I, in my turn, should ask, What should call me home? I feel myself a sort of unit in society—a solitary, floating adventurer to whom the question can hardly be put, Why do you so, or thus? *This* world is now full of excitement and confusion and war—why not stay to see the issues? . . . This letter is not so good nor so long as you desire, perhaps; but in my present mood it would be a Herculean task to write any more. Everything [seems] wrong with me."

Upon his return to Paris from Bordeaux he found further occasion of complaint. Mrs. Goddard had taken care, however, to inform him that she also had important duties which, at times, made letter-writing impracticable. "Your letter of a very old date I found on my return from Bordeaux," he informed her (November 8th, 1848). "It was dated early in September, and marked No. 7. It is, I think, the fifth I have received; but perhaps others are on their way and will arrive in the course of the season. It is but poor comfort to receive such tardy messengers; and news, as you rightly judge, is grown old after the lapse of a long ship passage. You know, of course, that the British steamers are still running, and never fail to transport a letter properly directed and paid for. . . . You say General Williams does not fancy my continued absence. Does he mean to drive me to return by silence? It is not the way; you know me well enough to have told him that. Indeed, nothing has so confirmed my resolution to spend the winter abroad as the evi-

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dences of indifference which met me at home. You know, I believe, better than any one, Mary, my whimsical, crochetty, sudden, obstinate character, not suited to any one but myself, and working out its own destinies by a sort of irresistible fatality. You have rightly judged that the lack of letters first grieved me, then provoked me; and that the final feeling was a complication of both. But in writing to you as I did, believe me, that if I had once suspected that you were in attendance upon the sick-bed of Louis, I would have written only in the most kindly words. You know too well for me to tell you of it that I regard you as my best friend in America, and if it were not for you, my attractions homeward would be diminished nine-tenths. I am not going to fill my letter with professions—you know I don't love them and never did; but seriously, putting yourself and Louis out of the question. . . . I could go to sleep to-night and wake up to-morrow forgetful of every soul that America contains. This, you say, is strong and unwarranted and all that—maybe it is so—but a lonely man is very apt to adopt such whimses."

It appears that Mrs. Goddard took him to task rather severely for so much in this vein, and in reply he wrote her the following important letter (December 20th, 1848):

Your last, dear Mary, is not now by me; but I think I can recall enough of its scope and spirit to be able to make a tolerable answer. Don't for a moment think that anything in it offended me. I have not yet so far lost all my qualities of a Christian man as to be offended with what was so well meant; nor am I so far ignorant of my own character as not to know that a great part of what you say is true. But when you attribute all my indisposition to conciliate, and to seek friends, and to keep them—to selfishness, unmingled—I shall demur. When you intimate that it may have

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been the result of early habit and circumstances, I agree most cordially, and regret most sincerely that such habits have now almost become a second nature. They have tormented me more than you will believe; and my very *inaptness* to conciliate and multiply and guard friendships has (from bitter consciousness that it belonged to me) brought more tears to my eyes in my quiet and silent moments than I can believe would come freely into the eyes of a purely selfish man. Don't think I want to disarm you of your very judicious charges by exciting your pity, though Heaven knows that I stand enough in need of it, and am grateful for the smallest boon. You have not taken enough into the account two qualities which harass me, and always will—an extreme sensitiveness, and overweening suspicion. You may say that sensitiveness belongs to a selfish man and is a part of him; if so, it is a part of him for which he is not justly blameable, and for which he is no more accountable than for his color. But I am ashamed to go on talking in this way, on so short a sheet and so near Christmas time. You say you know me; then, as you love me, think as well of me as you can. I had rather be well thought of by half a dozen than to be flattered for an empty and unmeaning courtesy, by half the world. My sensibilities and affections ever since I was eight years old have been too rudely jostled, and grown up among too many thorns, and suffered in too many waste places, to accommodate themselves ever again to proper world-shapes. Hence, I have a sort of conviction which is not new (much as I have talked to the contrary) that I never ought to marry; that so I shall avoid extending the blight of my presence, and narrow my ungainly qualities to the smallest and least hurtful limits.

This is queer Christmas talk to be written down in the gayest capital of the world, and at the witching hour of twelve at night; but so it is, and my heart chimes in with it. . . . You want to know how the winter passes with me? Not gaily, very far from it. I attend the lectures frequently, and take a walk every day of two or three miles. Still the winter is not gay, nor I. I seem more

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a sort of homeless, wandering, friendless, purposeless vagabond than ever before in my life. It matters very little, I say to myself, whether I get back into that American world next summer, or next year, or the next ten years. I am but a shuttle-cock beat about by the strong hand of Fortune, which strikes me here as hard and as often as it strikes me there. There is no avoiding the blows, and I had best suffer them where there are none to be bothered with my complaints.

These were, of course, the ebullitions of passing moods, and as the weeks progressed the pull toward America grew stronger. "The state of affairs in Europe," he informed Gen. Williams (December 18th, 1848), "is such as to make one ten-fold content with America, and I shall return more than ever satisfied that it possesses the most secure, most wise, and most liberal government in the world." And to Mrs. Goddard on the 8th of March 1849, he wrote: "I must at least go home to see how you are all getting along, to set my farm matters straight, and to draw a long breath of true republican air."

All the while he was considering plans for permanent occupation. Now it was the possibility of a professorship of literature in the new college at New Orleans, suggested by his friend Perkins, in preparation for which he felt that a year of study in a German university would be a necessity. Now the establishment of a new magazine in New York was contemplated. Again, he speculated on the possibility of a political appointment. "Should Mr. Marsh, of Vermont, be appointed to an embassy at Berlin, or Madrid," he wrote to Gen. Williams (January 6th, 1849), "I should try to secure the secretaryship of Legation for a year or two; but the appointments are so uncertain that I shall act as if it were an absolute impossibility." Always thoughts of country life



mingled with these visions. "Out of none of my plans does a farm ever escape," runs a portion of a sentence in a letter to Mrs. Goddard (November 8th, 1848), and the thought is repeated so often in the correspondence of the year that it forms an insistent refrain. "Scarce anything," he tells her in the same letter, "would so lure me home as the prospect of farm employ not too far removed from town. If Salem were not in verity the fag-end of creation, I should have been ensconced in a little chamber of my farmhouse long before now. Even in a literary score, I find I can accomplish twice as much in the country as in the city." Then, when indecision had reached its height, and there seemed no other desirable avenue open, he turned once more to thoughts of law. "I think I shall come home in the spring," he told Mrs. Goddard (January 25th, 1849), "and go directly back to law in New York until driven off by cholera or the heat."

As in Liverpool he had followed the course of the presidential election of 1844, so now in Paris he turned even more eagerly to the struggle of 1848 between Zachary Taylor, Lewis Cass, and Martin Van Buren. "I am glad Clay is dropped," he remarked to Mrs. Goddard (June 26th, 1848). "T[taylor] will be elected, and then a Whig cabinet, and Whig appointments." And again on the 1st of July he wrote: "I suppose, of course, he [Taylor] will be elected; we think he will, this side. If I was home, I would vote for him"—"and perhaps," he added in a letter of November 15th, "turn to making speeches in his favor." Now and then he felt an urge to public life. "What if I should come home a full-blooded politician," he asked Mary in this same letter of November 15th, "go out to Salem and set myself up for the Legislature? Ask them if they will vote for me. The truth is, the procession of the times here makes one feel that his



duty lies in having something to do with the direction of the Government influences." All in all, however, he was becoming surfeited with sight of political turmoil and political disappointment. As the time for the presidential election in France was approaching, he was writing (December 8th) to Mary in a strain that gave evidence of the direction in which all his dreams of political life were to turn. "We, you know, are all anxiously looking for what will come of our presidential election—most likely, blood. Another great turn over—then a king or an emperor, and then I will go home and turn to farming, satisfied that I have seen enough of the world's changes, and content to live in peace. I do wish from my heart I was snugly fixed on a little farm in the country where the noise and tumult of the world could only steal in by snatches. Pray is that dream of mine, I wonder, ever to be realized?"

The spell of the printed page was still holding him, and he was considering the best method of turning his Paris experiences to profitable account. The success of *Fresh Gleanings*, good as it was for a first book, had yet not been good enough to stir him to any enthusiasm. "They [friends in America] have been prodigiously surprised, I will warrant, before this at seeing Ik Marvel's imprint in the columns of the *Courier* dated in the middle of the revolutionary city," he wrote Mrs. Goddard (July 1st). "Maybe I can make myself a lion at coming back, on the strength of having seen the four bloodiest days of the last fifty years—more bloody for Paris even, than the massacre of St. Bartholomew. . . . I promised Mr. Bentley in London to write some sketches of this modern Paris for his *Miscellany*. I may do so. He treated me very kindly, and agreed to publish in handsome style any work I would write on my mountain trip, and allow

me one-half the profits. I have not yet decided what to do. Is it best? I have not enough of stimulus to do anything. The poor success of the first has altogether dampened my book-making ardor. No one but you and a few friends have spoken of it." Nevertheless, he informed her on the 8th of March 1849, that he was preparing his papers "for a small book on the events of the summer," which he planned to issue in the course of the year, provided he could find a publisher; "a sort of sketchy history of the summer at Paris," he called it.

It is worth our while to peep in upon him at his lodgings in 7 Rue de Tournon, and to see how amid all his duties and anxieties his mind, as in 1847, was ever "drifting like a sea bound river—homeward." The letter is to Mrs. Goddard under date of November 8th. "I am sitting by a little fire made of two sticks and a pine cone. The blaze is playing in quite home fashion over the white curtains of my bed, and over the gilt backs of my little stock of books; a couple of plaster heroes are smiling on me from the mantel, and a clay bust of Voltaire is grinning on the bureau. I would like to transport myself this moment and look in upon you. You have (allowing for our nearness to the East) just finished your tea, and are drawing up about the grate or the stove. Heigho! for the glowing old wood-fires of Elmgrove! I shall write an eclogue some day or other, and make the pastorals pipe it in that old valley of our farms. My clock, over the mantel, has a queer conceit in its construction: two little bronze boys are trying to catch a butterfly; the butterfly is somehow connected with the clock-work, and keeps moving—always just so far away—always just so near being caught. I moralize upon it in all sorts of fashion: sometimes it is *time* which is always slipping and we always chasing; some-

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times it is *pleasure* which we are always seeking and never seize; sometimes it is *life* which we are always catching and always losing. So you have three texts for as many sermons, and I nodding on my paper."

A quiet melancholy was stealing upon him; a feeling of age that was, in truth, a necessary ripening of his mind and spirit for the work that lay not far ahead of him, as much as it was a result of loneliness, uncertain health, and absence of regular occupation. More and more he was turning to Mary for sympathy, advice, and comfort. "You see," he told her (July 1st, 1848), "I consult you as much as ever, though so far removed. I believe what you say, Mary, that you have spoilt me for a wife. I shall never find one who will be so tender to my faults as you have been, and so willing to praise what little merit I may have; indeed, I have now given up all expectation of marrying, and shall return home next time in full determination of living a bachelor." Again, half jokingly, he wrote (December 8th, 1848): "As for me, Mary, age is creeping on me, I imagine, and in a year or two I shall give up all thought of ever getting married. A dog, a horse, and a cat must keep me company; and neither one nor the other of them can be annoyed by my petulance, or laugh at my foibles." Often his mood was one of "dreaming of the days that are no more." "You don't know how often my thoughts wander delightedly to that old country home at Salem," he told Mary (March 24th, 1849). "I tramp over those hills, and smoke on that porch, and rub up my gun, and pat Carlo nearly every night of the week. I don't know as I shall ever get it out of my head. Surely my feelings will never attach to Norwich in the same way, of that I am ten-times sure. I sometimes dream of having a great fortune, and going back there, and re-instating everything in

the old way, and so dream on again a life of happy idleness. If your tenant is disposed, I daresay I may go out there to pass some weeks of next summer. I would pitch a camp bedstead in the corner of my old room, hang up my gun in the old place, tie to the wall a couple of book-shelves with Burke and Shakespeare and Izaak Walton, stick over the mantel an engraving, and then—what? Ah, it would be but the vainest shadow—the peskiest skeleton—the rottenest image of what used to be! The conviction grows on me more and more, and harder and harder, that all the play-time of my life—all the enjoyable piece of our stingy allotment of time—is gone; and that thenceforward it must be one struggle and fight and frown—all the while in the sun's heat, and no shade of trees to run to—all the while thirsty, and no cool spring to dip a lip upon—all the while panting like a tired dog, and no kennel to crawl into and sleep. You may say, kindly enough, this is sad folly for a man of six and twenty; but I have a sort of feeling of having grown old before my time, and a great deal of the weight which burdens a man of fifty is lying on my shoulders."

He sailed from Havre in the packet-ship *Zurich* near the middle of April 1849, and experienced a somewhat long and disturbed voyage. A mulatto cook, having refused to obey the captain's orders, had grown mutinous and was placed in irons. Escaping from his place of confinement during the night, he again attacked and almost succeeded in killing the captain; but was finally placed in custody for the remainder of the journey. The event cast a gloom over the long passage of somewhat more than five weeks. Among the passengers whom Donald came to know and like best was a Madame Cécile Pusey, a sister of the eminent Prof. Arnold Guyot, who with her three children was on her way to join her hus-

band on land which he had acquired near St. Louis, Missouri. The voyage later found record<sup>1</sup> in *Seven Stories*, for the "good ship *Nimrod*" is only another name for the *Zurich*.

Before the middle of May, Donald was resting at Mary Goddard's home in Norwich. Here a letter came to him from George P. Marsh. "You are aware no doubt," wrote Mr. Marsh (June 9th, 1849), "that I have been appointed to the mission at Constantinople. I wish the Legation were so arranged that I could offer you an acceptable place; but, unfortunately, no provision is made for any secretary or other attaché except the dragoman who acts as Secretary of Legation. The pay of the Minister is so small that he cannot afford to allow a compensation to an attaché, and indeed, I imagine that he can have little occasion for any official assistant except the dragoman. It has, however, occurred to me that you might desire to visit the Levant, and in that case, I suppose it might be useful to you to be connected with the American Legation, and I write to say that if you incline to adventure a pilgrimage among the Paynim, I shall be happy to give you any privileges I have power to confer. We hope to sail in July, and if the state of Germany will permit, to pass through that country and by way of Vienna to Trieste, and so by steam to Constantinople. Could you not turn such a trip to account?" It would seem that only a lack of funds on the part of the American minister prevented Donald's joining Mr. Marsh on this beginning of his long and distinguished service abroad.

Within a few weeks Donald went on to New York, established himself in a little second-floor room of Mrs. Barnes's home, 11 Fifth Avenue, and settled down once more, "studying law after a fashion" with Mr. Sargent, preparing the

<sup>1</sup> *Seven Stories*, 22-39.

manuscript of *The Battle Summer*, and revolving over and over the vexed question of what to do. *The Battle Summer* was published early in 1850 by Baker & Scribner. The volume, designated as "The Reign of Blouse," treats of the events immediately preceding the insurrections of February 23d and 24th, 1848, and carries the narrative down to June, the first month of Donald's own observation. It was his intention to continue with a second volume, "The Reign of Bourgeois," based entirely upon his own observations; but the reception accorded to the first was not sufficiently hearty to spur him on to the preparation of the second. The style of *The Battle Summer* did not meet with public approval. "It is not good, inasmuch as it is not Mr. Mitchell's own," wrote a reviewer in *Putnam's Monthly Magazine*. "It is a very obvious attempt at the Carlylean style of writing, and we confess we don't like our author in borrowed clothes. He wears his own so gracefully that we would never wish him to change them."<sup>1</sup> Another reviewer<sup>2</sup> spoke of it as "a bald imitation of Carlyle's nodosities, too execrable to find mercy from reader or critic." Mr. Mitchell, always extremely sensitive to public opinion, and always encouraged or depressed by the favorable or unfavorable sales of his books, dropped the subject, and never again attempted anything in the same style—a style entirely foreign, it may be said, to the bent of his genius.

He did not, however, give over writing. For the time being it seemed the only thing which could occupy him seriously. It at least afforded him pleasure and a source of revenue.

<sup>1</sup> The January 1853 number, p. 77.

<sup>2</sup> In the *New York Tribune*.



## VIII

### SATIRIST AND DREAMER

Folly has been my target, wherever it appeared; and I have endeavored by the wide range of my observations, to do away with the suspicion that I ranked vice by social grades, or heaped upon wealth or fashion any gratuitous reproach.—*The Lorgnette*, 2.294.

I sometimes think that I must be a very honest fellow for writing down those fancies which every one else seems afraid to whisper.—*Dream Life*, 17.

From boyhood constant employment was a requisite of Donald's nature. Idleness he could not endure; and yet it seemed to him just now that he was doomed to a life of profitless inactivity. His friends, too, were becoming concerned about his apparent aimlessness and indecision; they thought he should be "doing something." They did not take into account sufficiently the fact that in his case appearances were deceptive; for even when he seemed least occupied he was drifting farthest on the wings of his fancy. It was impossible that his friends should know the children of his brain that were growing toward their birth.

It should be remembered that this was for him a peculiarly trying period. It was no easy matter for one in his state of mind to pass from the exciting scenes of Paris revolution to the dull routine of a New York law office. For one of his temperament, I fancy that the law, even under the most favorable conditions, would soon have grown distasteful. It had now become intolerable. Employment,



however, he must find, and that of a nature to answer as substitute for the stimulus of travel and adventure.

The success of his former contributions to the *Courier and Enquirer*—his “Capitol Sketches” and “Marvel Letters”—no doubt suggested the thought of undertaking something in the same satirical vein on a plan somewhat more elaborate. It must have been very soon after the publication of *The Battle Summer* that he conceived the notion of publishing a weekly pamphlet, or journal, something on the order of the classic *Spectator* and of *Salmagundi*, in which he could turn to account his leisurely, though critical, study of American life, particularly as it revealed itself in New York City. It was inevitable that two extended periods of residence in Europe should enable him to see many of the faults and virtues of his own country in a way that he could not otherwise have done; and it occurred to him that the work he had in mind would be not only a source of enjoyment but a means of improving public manners and morals by subjecting them to merited, though good-natured, criticism. He decided to adopt a new pen-name, and to preserve as far as possible a strict anonymity. All of the arrangements he surrounded with enough of secrecy to give zest to every passing week, and to satisfy his appetite for excitement. The project combined, in a way peculiarly satisfying to him, employment, public service, and amusement.

His plans were well laid. It happened that just then his old Norwich schoolmate and fast friend, William Henry Huntington, was at work in New York upon the compilation of a Latin lexicon. Huntington made the contracts with the printers and the booksellers, and arranged for the weekly delivery of the pamphlets to the shops where they were to be sold. It is likely that in the beginning only Huntington and

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Charles Scribner, of Baker & Scribner, who printed the first twelve numbers, were in the secret.

After two or three weeks of preliminary arrangement, the fun began. On a morning of late January 1850, the windows of the Broadway book-shops, particularly those of the shop belonging to Henry Kernot, a lively little Englishman, became the centres of attraction. Copies of a small, yellow-covered pamphlet, *The Lorgnette, or Studies of the Town by an Opera Goer*, were bidding good-morrow to the passing New Yorkers. The copies bore date of January 20th. The picture of a young dandy peering intently through a huge lorgnette, and giving at first glance the impression of a large, staring owl, looked out from the cover upon all the passers-by. The bait was attractive. The curious bought, read, questioned, wondered. Who could this reputed author, this John Timon, be, who promised "a work for the express entertainment of all spinsters who wish husbands; all belles who admire their own charms; all beaux who are captivated with their own portraits; all old ladies who wish to be young; all authors studious of their own works; all fashionists in love with their own position; all Misses eager to be seen; all rich men who are lovers of their money; all bachelors looking for a fortune; all poets infatuated with their powers; all critics confident of their taste; and all sensible men who are content to be honest"? No one could give a satisfactory answer; the whole matter was surrounded by profound mystery. Soon the newspapers and magazines were hot on the trail. Within a short time *The Lorgnette* was the talk of the town, and the matter of John Timon's identity the question of the hour.

Henry Kernot's shop, in virtue of the pamphlets' bearing his name as publisher, became the storm-centre. Visitors

thronged his store. They plied him with questions, they praised, they condemned, they laughed, they sneered; they could not ignore. But the little bookseller could not have informed them if he would. "Even Mr. Kernot himself," wrote Mr. Mitchell in 1883, "was not cognizant of their true authorship; and knew little save that the big bundle of yellow-covered pamphlets was delivered in a mysterious way upon his counter every Thursday morning. Indeed, I am disposed to believe that Mr. Kernot's important air, and affable smiles, and tightly closed lips, fed the mystification not a little. The good man even volunteered the keeping of a weekly diary, in which he entered the opinions *pro* and *con* of his fashionable clients—a very full diary and humorous (Mr. Kernot not lacking in that quality); and this budget, which always found its way to me through the mediation of one or two friends who were alone in the secret, is still in one of my pigeonholes, scored with underlinings, and radiant with notable New York names of thirty years since."<sup>1</sup>

Never did boys enjoy a secret game better than Donald and his confidants enjoyed this work of satire and mystification. As the weeks went by, others were taken into confidence. Henry J. Raymond, of the *Courier and Enquirer*, and Samuel Bowles, of the *Springfield Republican*, "were easily able to spoil too warm a trail in the search for the true John Timon." In New York, Dr. Fordyce Barker and Samuel J. Tilden, and in Boston, William H. Bond, kept eyes and ears open for material which would lend itself to *Lorgnette* purposes, and passed the results of their observation on to Timon. For three months the endeavor to identify the author waxed more and more earnestly. Donald, now from his "garret" on Fifth Avenue where to-day stands the Brevoort

<sup>1</sup> See *Reveries of a Bachelor*, xvii.

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House, now from Norwich, and again from East Wareham, Massachusetts, watched the merry game go on. There is no need of enlarging upon the delight with which he and his confederates read such communications from Mr. Kernot as the following:

New York, 19th April 1850.

To the Editor of *The Lorgnette*.

Dear Sir,

In literature, as in society, the fashion and habits of the passing day have a contagious influence, and therefore, in conformity with the prevailing feudalism of modern book-making, and the sly artifice of novel manufacturers, I forward you, under the customary assurance, "*to be continued*," such gleanings as I have been able to gather since the last communication which I had the pleasure to address you.

### *Diary.*

Tuesday, 16th April.—*Mrs. Clarkson* (538 B'way) sent her son for one or two numbers of *Willis's New Work* publishing weekly; guessed what he meant, but for the joke of it handed him the last issue of the *Home Journal*, when he immediately remarked, "No! No! you *publish it*—*The Lorgnette*! It's very odd you are ignorant of what all the town knows. It's not like you, Sir, you are generally so well informed; but this time you are certainly behind the age." *N. B.* A bright and smart lad to administer so severe and startling a reproof.

*W. C. Maitland* (Bleecker St.) "What is your John Timon driving at? I'll be d—— if I can understand him. Does he pretend to be humorous, witty, or what?" *N. B.* Like young students in the Elements of Euclid—the *Lorgnette* proves a sort of *Pons Asinorum*—the *Q. E. D.* of perplexing conjecture.

*Two Young Bloods* entered in a rollicksome manner and asked for the last No. of the *L.*, one of them in a jovial voice remarking, "This work is going to make a *rage*, Sir."

## SATIRIST AND DREAMER

*Ik Marvel* favored me with a visit, during which he told me "that he thought the *L.* would sell better if made more *satirical*"—upon the principle, I suppose, of pampering to the vitiated curiosity of the many by whom scandal will always be greedily purchased.

*A Gentleman* (stranger) called to inquire if we had all the numbers of the *Lorgnette*. On assuring him that I had really only one set left, and trying hard to obtain it for 8/-, then 9/-, then 10/-, with a good deal of pleasant joking and chaffing, eventually appeared glad to secure it. He was a very pleasant, good natured gent., and said he *knew* John Timon, and interrogated me by asking whether I had lately seen his "honor" in the retirement of his garret—his "*private* room near the clouds." To which I replied, as to any knowledge of John Timon's person and whereabouts, I was completely in "the clouds,"—and altogether ignorant whether he was paying an erratic visit to the inhabitants of the moon, or like the mystic Koran of Mahomet, floating in mid-air, or ensconced in the impenetrable mystery of the intermediate state—supposititious, pregnant with the most awful debate. He further added and expressed himself delighted with the work, saying "it was full of good things and wholesome truths." I offered to send the work to his residence, with the view of learning his name, which he declined with a knowing look, as much as to say, in slang phrase, "*No go.*"

Wednesday, 17th.—*Mrs. Kirkland* called, and approaching me with quick step, said to me aside, and in secrecy, "that she had discovered John Timon in a glaring mistake; and meant to write him on the misquotation of the passage referred to in the *Psalms*." (*Vide* Psalm 73 : 20 in connection with the passage in page 212, No. 9.)

*A Gentleman* who purchased a copy of the last No. of the *L.* was astonished at my alleged ignorance of the author, and assured me it was *undoubtedly* by *Mr. Osborne*.<sup>1</sup> It does appear to me a reproach on American literature, in which I am willing to bear my

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Mitchell has added the annotation, "Laughton Osborn, b. 1809; d. 1878."

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share of the censure for not suggesting his name before, that amidst the multitudinous probabilities and improbabilities of the authorship of the *L.*, the name of this gentleman has not ere this started up with brilliant prominence—a gentleman of elegant manners, erudite learning, fine classical attainments, profound thought, and extensive travel—combining in himself all the requisites of a polished scholar, and which no genuine philomath with suitable and appreciative abilities would venture to dispute, who has ever examined the *Vision of Rubeta*. But

“Full many a gem of purest ray serene,  
The dark unfathom’d caves of ocean bear;  
Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,  
And waste its sweetness on the desert air.”


*James W. Beekman* has just returned from Albany and told me “that the *L.* is much talked of there.” Amen! to the favorable opinion of the capital of the Empire State.

*Dr. C. Gilman*. “Well, Mr. K., I am happy to inform you that your little publication, the *L.*, is very highly praised *everywhere*, very highly, indeed!”

Thursday, Apl. 18.—*A Gentleman* called to inquire for the No. of the *Literary World* containing the critique on the *L.*, remarking, “Oh! it is pretty generally known that the article was written by Mr. Bristed.”

It was my intention to have added a few more remarks, but this I must defer (suffering so severely from a distracting toothache) until to-morrow, when I will endeavor to furnish you with a list of the alleged authors of the *Lorgnette* as far as I remember them, and before I began the Diary—with other “wise saws and modern instances”—meanwhile I bid you a friendly and temporary farewell, and remain

Your obed’t Serv’t,  
Publisher of the *Lorgnette*.

 Please return me at your earliest convenience my proofs of the *Lorgnette*, that Mr. Scribner showed you; with all the



'notices' you can spare the loan of (*to be carefully returned to you*), accompanied by such remarks—quips and quirks—"whims and oddities," &c., as you may desire. I want to do your good little work *justice*. "*Fiat justitia*."

Number 12 of the first series was dated April 24th. A portion of this number Timon devoted to a disquisition on the "Authors and Authorlings" who were then on the public tongue, and of course seized the opportunity to consider in turn and by name several of those most prominently mentioned in connection with the authorship of *The Lorgnette*. He said his say about Joel T. Headley, N. P. Willis, Richard Grant White, Cornelius Matthews, and J. K. Paulding, to mention only a few; and at the same time took occasion to divert attention from himself. "Mr. Ik. Marvell (Mitchell) has also come in for a share of the suspicion; and although, perhaps, I ought to feel flattered by the association of my work with the name of either author or authorling, yet it does really seem that my unpretending and straightforward sentences show very little to evidence the same paternity with the contortions and abruptnesses of *The Battle Summer*. To say the least of it, my errors against grammar have not been wilful; and my arrangement of style has not looked toward the quackery of dramatic effect. Yet withal the compliment is acknowledged, since the same gentleman has written a most creditable book of travels, which of an idle hour will repay a second reading. Mr. Marvell is certainly a promising young man, and with thus much of compliment to sustain him for the loss, I relieve him entirely of the new and unnecessarily imposed burden of authorship."<sup>1</sup> The number closed with a tentative farewell from Timon. "My pub-

<sup>1</sup> See *The Lorgnette*, 1.286. It is likely that Mr. Mitchell spelled the name "Marvell" as a means of spoiling the scent still more.



lisher informs me as the sheets are passing through the press that the twelve numbers now issued will make a fair-sized volume; you may possibly, therefore," he wrote, "miss the ensuing week your accustomed visitant; and whether it will make its appearance the coming month will depend very much on my own whim, and the humor of the town. But do not be misled . . . it has been thrown out by some that the *Lorgnette* was nothing more than an eccentric charity; and one very grave and important publisher assured me that it was wholly paid for by its author, and then placed, printed and bound, in the hands of the publisher. The dear public will allow me to correct this error, and to assure them that though they may laugh at my labor, they are paying for the laugh. Nor is this said in vanity, but in justification; for nothing seems to me a more absurd charity than for a man to publish his thoughts when the public do not care enough for his thought to pay for the printing. Such a man (and on this point my opinion will be obnoxious to many town-authors) had much better every way drop his surplus pence into the parish poor box; in that case, he may console himself with knowing that no one is pestered with his thought, and that some poor souls may possibly be stuffing their bellies with his money. John Timon neither owes any man, nor is he any man's creditor. He leaves off, if he leaves off, as fairly as he started; and he will be at liberty to begin whenever his whim directs." <sup>1</sup>

Toward the end of April the scent had begun to grow uncomfortably warm. "Some quick means must be hit upon to bluff suspicion hereabouts," wrote Donald to Huntington, from Norwich (May 1st). "They are strongly on the track, and the scent lies well. I have been asked a

<sup>1</sup> *The Lorgnette*, 1.292-293. See also p. 174 of this biography.

half-dozen times, and have in some instances made a poor figure of it. You came in for a little of it. Now under that notion couldn't something be done in the *courier*? For instance, haven't you a friend who could notice the *Lorgnette* in a paragraph for Sykes, and say 'the impression that this is written by a gentleman of this city—at least [by] a native of Norwich, is wholly erroneous, and we have the amplest authority for denying it. Indeed, the severe way in which Mr. Marvel is treated would forbid the belief?' The last part perhaps is questionable; the first by means of the equivoque will work well, and if published, I will get Raymond to copy into *Courier and Enquirer*."

Huntington, who was just then negotiating for a transference of *Lorgnette* publication into other hands, replied (May 3d): "In reference to the Norwich suspicions: Now, there is a wide way between suspicion and proof. Let the heathen rage. Live down the charge, or face the music and lie it down, as the casuists in such cases allow. A disclaimer in the *Courier* (which I see you very properly write with a small c) would, to my seeming, be very ill advised, and [would] strengthen suspicion in the right direction. Besides that, so far as I am concerned, the charge is not direct nor general enough to call for it. Were I to take the pains to say I was not so and so, the not particularly agreeable comment would be, 'Who the devil said you were?' The ambiguity of the disclaimer would, I think, be appreciated and resolved very readily. No, no, such a movement would betray too much anxiety. The indifference of innocence is your card. It surely will be no difficult matter by means of the newspapers and correspondents to treat the topics of the city in a way to show that the writer is an eye and ear witness of the doings of yesterday; *e. g.*, a line from an anniversary address (quoted

direct, with a verbal alteration, from the *Tribune* report), a turn, a bonnet, a blunder of an actor or auditor at last night's opera, which none but an auditor could have seen or heard, the Perrine pavement, etc., etc., these will be your defence by *alibi*. Save the country and provincial-city topics till your return to the metropolis; *cram* on Greece, St. Petersburg, Timbuctoo, or some other where you never were in to prove that John Timon is familiar with the very paving stones of those parts. Meantime, hurry out the reveries. Send *Dana* a letter from Agawam. Stop at the Irving or Astor and get yourself announced on your *return*. Don't come back these three weeks. I will try to make the Doctor [Fordyce Barker] send you some hints from the opera to-morrow night—it's last night, by the way—Huntington's gallery closes, too, this week—and the anniversaries begin. The daily papers will keep you informed of these things, of the theatre, etc. Maybe as trifles to prove yourself here, these may be of service: Stuart & Co. have just begun tearing away at corner of Broadway and Chamber preparatory to enlargement; parsons arriving to get pudding for the faithful and attend anniversaries; gay white and red curtains (not to be praised) at the Irving House dining room; all manner of drab felt hats coming out with the spring; theatre full of strangers . . . etc. Any distinguished scamp, gentleman, or officer (see morning papers at Safford & Parker's) at the Irving or Astor can be met the day of his arrival in Broadway. If I go to Brougham's Benefit, you shall hear of it. That circus matter is not markedly wonderful. Jack Shepherd *et id omne* playing at the Bowery in a parallel course with W. Shakespeare. . . ."

"I accept fully your return suggestions about the *Courier* (with the *small capital*), and shall fight the matter out in

dignified quiet," Donald humbly agreed (May 6th). "You know you are authorized to say I have denied it—to Dana, and to as many more as you choose."

Up to the completion of the twelfth number Donald had himself borne all the expenses of publication. He was now becoming convinced that if he could enter into a satisfactory arrangement with a publishing house whereby they would assume all the expenses of publication on a royalty basis, it would be more advantageous all round. He felt the work would be pushed to better advantage by a company entirely responsible for its success. Latterly, in spite of all the ardor of Master Kernot, as he and his confidants called the little Englishman, Donald had a growing conviction that his magazine was not handled with sufficient enterprise. Huntington thereupon approached Stringer & Townsend and began negotiations for a new basis of publication. "I am this instant," he informed Donald (April 30th), "home from an interview with Mr. Stringer, with whom I have bargained. . . . On being told that Ik Marvel, D. G. Mitchell, and J. Timon were but an unitarian individual, expresses much surprise, with great familiarity in regard to the works of the *two gentlemen* first mentioned—evidently well tickled with his bargain at this discovery—had seen you often, but thought somehow that Ik Marvel was a 'large man.' . . . So go right on and 'treat the town' soon with a new dish. Cry aloud and spare not. If foolish individuals standing in the front rank of folly choose to think themselves aimed at, it is their fault; don't regard their vanity, but blaze away at the whole column, and no blank cartridges. . . . Stringer appreciates the importance of *mumness* to the full; *e. g.*, he does not mean to let Townsend know who you are (!)" On the 3d of May Huntington closed the contract. "S. & T. are

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bricks, trumps, especially S., and mean to push the *L.* to the utmost limit; a new placard every week, etc.," he wrote exultingly at the close of negotiations. "And now you are fixed," he concluded, "per contract, with employment perfectly honest, quite honorable, and profitable enough to pay for necessities and leave a trifle over for drinks; *dulce et decorum*, as Rev. Mr. Woodbury would say; so come on, 'hold not thine hand aback.'"

After five more months of the same rare fun, Donald brought *The Lorgnette* to a close with the twelfth number of the second series, dated October 9th, 1850. The venture had been more profitable than he had anticipated. According to an account rendered by Baker & Scribner on the 10th of June 1850, almost 5,000 copies of the first twelve numbers had been sold. Stringer & Townsend reported (April 28th, 1851) a sale of almost 9,000 copies of the second twelve numbers, and 3,000 copies of the first and second series in book form. This last report showed a net copyright due to Mr. Mitchell of \$921.23. The work came to a fourth edition published in 1851 by Charles Scribner, with a new preface signed by Ik Marvel. In this edition the authorship was for the first time virtually acknowledged.

Donald had not written the papers which make up *The Lorgnette* in any spirit of levity; he had put into them sincerity and earnestness. To this fact, no doubt, may be attributed much of their success. In closing, he spoke the faith that was in him:

It is now ten months, my dear Fritz, since I first put on the dignity of print, and undertook to tell you something of our life in town. As I then said, a hap-hazard ramble over many portions of the world, and a feeling that some modest acknowledgment was due from me for the rich amusement that the public had so long

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and gratuitously afforded, prompted me to begin. I had also a hope that while my letters would relieve the plethora of much and long observation, they might in their small way do a trifle of good.

But it was no part of my purpose to make my work altogether a public charity; for I had an honest conviction—not currently entertained by our town writers—that deeds of charity would be much more acceptable in the way of spare pennies, than in any dribblings from a pen.

A paragraphist in the *Literary World* has indeed thrown out a hint that nothing but a long purse could justify the author's continuance of his labor. I understand this to be a pleasant intimation (coming too from an experienced source) that the *Lorgnette* was a bill of expense to its author. To have my open avowal on this point doubted by you, Fritz, would grieve me; a doubt from some quarters might provoke me; but there are still others, I am happy to say, where the expression of such doubt is neither grievous, provoking, nor important.

I have amused myself from time to time during the summer with sauntering into my publisher's shop to overhear the remark and to watch the pleasant brusquerie of my excellent friend, Mr. Kernot. Of late, however, he has grown suspicious of middle-aged gentlemen who wear a half country air; he is by no means so communicative as at the first; and only the other day he honored me with a look of searching scrutiny that required all my self-possession to withstand.

The public has seen fit to regard these letters in the light of strictures upon the town society. It was by no means my wish to give them so narrow a limit; nor has my playful raillery borne with it, surely, any of the assumption of a judge. Still, the public are welcome to their decision; and in view of it, I cannot better close than by setting down more pointedly than I have yet done, a few of my old-fashioned opinions.



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But first let me spare a word for those learned coxcombs who consider all talk about society as sheer twaddle. That a man who knows nothing of the courtesies of life, should sneer at them is quite natural; but that he should plume himself upon his ignorance is not a little extraordinary. . . . The habits of amusement, the everyday practices, and, in short, all those observances which go to make up what is called fashion, have a very considerable bearing upon the virtue, the manliness, and the intelligence of a people. To slight them, while careful about the ordinary claims of education, is to neglect the atmosphere we breathe, while anxious only for our meat and drink.

I have been accused of balking the main issues, and of playing around matters which needed the firm touch of analysis; but I take the liberty of saying that these scattered shots upon the town have had their aim. . . . It seemed to me to be an honest man's work to have a crack at those follies which were growing upon our newly-formed society; and the more honest, since nearly all the journals of the town were approving and magnifying whatever fashion decided upon doing.

The absurd intimations which I have seen in some country papers that my letters were written merely to unfold the pretensions of the vulgarly rich, or the follies of an upper ten thousand, I wholly abjure; if I cordially detest anything, it is those eternal railers at an imaginary set whom they thus designate. It is not necessary to be rich, to be vulgar; nor to be vulgar, to be rich. Folly has been my target, wherever it appeared; and I have endeavored, by the wide range of my observations, to do away with the suspicion that I ranked vice by social grades, or heaped upon wealth or fashion any gratuitous reproach.

The tone of all my letters has been republican; they have tended, in their humble way, towards the dismantling of those awkward and vulgar scaffoldings by which our social architects of the town were trying to build up something like the gone-by feudal fab-



rics of the old world. I have pandered to none of the finical tastes of an "Upper Ten"—to none of the foolish longings of a "Lower Ten," and to none of the empty and ill-directed clamor of those who affect to guide the million. John Timon, in the pride of his citizenship, as a republican, and as a New Yorker, acknowledges no Upper Ten! He will live where he chooses to live; and he will amuse himself as he chooses to amuse himself. He will neither take his building schemes from the nod of Mr. Such-an-one, nor wear his glove at the beck of Such-another. He will try to consult those proprieties which reason, good feeling, and good custom suggest; and he will mingle in such circles as will receive him kindly, as will greet him with a manly cordiality, and entertain him by such frankness, intelligence, and refinement, as he thinks he can appreciate.

Nor do I apprehend that these things are to be bounded by houses, or by streets; or that any man, or any set of men, can lay down the codes by which I am to reach them, or prescribe the ways in which I am to enjoy them. Good habit, in a free society, is as much a matter of taste and circumstance, as coloring in painting, or the management of the rod in angling; and who, pray, is going to give us rules for the precise amount of chromes, or for the exact length of line, or the dressing of a hackle?

Good breeding does not necessarily suppose a knowledge of all conventionalities; and a true gentleman can in no way better show his gentle blood than by the grace and modesty with which he wears his ignorance of special formulas. If there be not a native courtesy in a man which tells him when he is with gentlemen, and when with the vulgar; and which informs him, as it were by intuition, what will conspire with the actions of the first, and offend against the sympathies of the last, he may study till doomsday his etiquette, and his French Feuilleton, and remain a boor to the end!

To conclude—as the Doctors say—let me suggest that our town society needs nothing so much as an added geniality, honesty, and simplicity. It hardly seems to me of so much importance that our

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streets should show a Paris *pardessus* but ten days old, or a new polka in the fortnight of its introduction along the Faubourg St. Honoré, as that social fellowship should become easy and refined, and a little wit, taste, and grace be grafted upon the body of our fashion.

And now Fritz,

———“Timon hath done his reign!”

Mr. Mitchell never saw reason to regret the opinions he voiced in his little periodical; and he believed in their soundness to the end. “The *Lorgnette*, whose smart couplet of volumes may be encountered at times in old bookshops, and which belonged also to the early period of the writer’s craft in books, I should on many counts have heartily greeted in this embanked edition—assured that much of its satiric comment and earnest sermonizing against the worship of Mammon would still have aptness and significance.” With these words Mr. Mitchell bade farewell to the books when in 1907 they were omitted from the Edgewood edition of his collected works.

The anonymity of *The Lorgnette*, and the accompanying attempt on the part of the public to search out the true authorship, led to important results. One of the tests applied by the zealous searchers was that of style. When, therefore, *The Lorgnette* had reached its twelfth number, and suspicion of authorship had begun, as Mr. Mitchell said, to settle down upon his own name “with an ugly pertinacity,” it was in the matter of style that he determined to throw the curious off the scent. It so happened that under his pseudonym of Ik Marvel he had contributed a paper to the *Southern Literary Messenger*, which, under the title of “A Bachelor’s Reverie,” appeared in the issue of September 1849, and was reprinted with the author’s permission in the

first number of *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, January 1850. "Its style and strain being wholly unlike that of the *Lorgnette*, it occurred to me," wrote Mr. Mitchell, "that it would be a politic thing, and further my purpose of mystifying the literary quidnuncs, to add more papers in a kindred vein, and publish all together as an independent volume. I wrote, therefore, the two succeeding chapters, and submitted them, with the one previously printed, to Mr. Fields (then of the house of Ticknor & Fields), who declined their publication. I had made this proposal to a Boston house, because my well-known and most friendly relations with Mr. Charles Scribner, and his half-understood privity to the origin of the *Lorgnette* papers, would (in the event of my publishing the new book with him) go to fasten the suspected authorship more strongly upon me. . . . Failing of an outside publisher, the little book was speedily put through the press by Mr. Scribner—though with only moderate hopes, on his part, of its success. It was, however, in a vein that struck people as being somewhat new; it made easy reading for young folks; it laid strong hold upon those of romantic appetites; and reached within a very few months a sale which surprised the publisher as much as it surprised the author."<sup>1</sup> In this modest way Mr. Mitchell described the genesis of the book which almost immediately made him famous.<sup>2</sup>

*Reveries of a Bachelor* was published in December 1850. Before the month was gone it became evident that the author had gripped the public. Within a year from the date of publication approximately 14,000 copies had been sold. That is equivalent now to a sale of almost 70,000 copies

<sup>1</sup> *Reveries of a Bachelor*, xix-xxi.

<sup>2</sup> It is popularly believed that Mr. Mitchell wrote *Reveries* in his little farmhouse at Salem. He assured his family that he had never, to the best of his recollection, spent a night under its roof.

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within a twelvemonth. *Reveries* went straight to the heart, and readers hastened to assure the author of their delight in his work. At last he felt that he was coming into his own.

Meanwhile, during the summer of 1851, Fletcher Harper, who was then fathering *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, reached out for the young author. "We wish, monthly, one or two pages of gems, criticisms on society, etc., etc., for our magazine, to come under a new head," wrote Mr. Harper. "The articles ought, generally, I suppose, to be short and lively. We wish the arrangement to be confidential—entirely so—and that you should not be known as the author for the present." In acceding to the proposal, Donald suggested the "Editor's Easy Chair" as suitable heading for the new department; and his "first installment of gossip" from "the red-backed easy chair" appeared in *Harper's*, October 1851. He continued the papers until 1855. In succeeding years, George William Curtis and William Dean Howells, carrying on the tradition established by Mr. Mitchell, added lustre to the department. So long and so successful was the connection of both Mr. Curtis and Mr. Howells with the "Editor's Easy Chair" that their names have become identified with it in a kind of proprietary way. We need to remember that while the idea originated with Fletcher Harper, the name was bestowed by Mr. Mitchell, and the trend and tone of the papers established by him. Indeed, Mr. Howells in later years took occasion to pay tribute to this work of Mr. Mitchell, "the graceful and gracious Ik Marvel . . . never unreal in anything but his pretence of being the real editor of the magazine."<sup>1</sup>

Elated over the success of the *Reveries*, Donald deter-

<sup>1</sup> See *Harper's Magazine* (December 1900), 153-158.

mined to write another book of similar character. The experiment was not without hazard, as his friends were quick to point out to him. "I well remember," he wrote, "that at a Yale College gathering<sup>1</sup> which followed closely upon the publication of the *Reveries*, a classmate of mine (now I think holding high judicial position) took me aside and warned me with a very grave and solemn countenance, against being made a puppet of the publishers: he had seen with good-natured distress that I was to follow up the first success with another book in the same vein and at short order: he feared the result; it was driving things too hard. I listened gratefully; but, it must be said, with dulled ears."<sup>2</sup>

Having made arrangements to live with Mr. and Mrs. Allan Sisson, then in tenancy of the Goddard farm, he turned to the Salem country for inspiration and quiet, and took up his abode in the upper west room of the Elmgrove house, the room which he had always occupied when Mary Goddard was mistress of the home. There, amid silences and memories, he wrought *Dream Life*. "Young sentiment was then so jubilant in me that it seemed to me I could have reeled it off by scores; nor indeed did spontaneity prove lacking," he wrote in retrospect. "It was to a quaint old farm-house shadowed by elms, in a very quiet country (whose main features peep out from the opening chapters of Spring, Summer, and Autumn in this volume), that I went to finish my summer task—the book being promised for early winter. There was scant, but bracing, farmer's fare for me; and a world of encouragement in the play of sun and shadow over

<sup>1</sup> The gathering referred to was undoubtedly the decennial reunion of Mr. Mitchell's class, held at the New Haven House, Wednesday evening, July 30th, 1851. The classmate must have been William Law Learned, later, and for many years, a member of the supreme court of New York.

<sup>2</sup> See all of the 1883 Preface of *Dream Life*.

the tranquil valley landscape, and in the murmur of the brooks that I had known of old. In six weeks I had completed my task.”<sup>1</sup> The dream of 1848 was fulfilled. “I shall write an eclogue some day or other, and make the pastorals pipe it in that old valley of our farms.” When Mary Goddard read *Dream Life* and *Reveries of a Bachelor*, that sentence from Donald’s letter must have come once more to her mind.<sup>2</sup>

A few months before he had begun the writing of *Dream Life*, Donald had made the acquaintance of Washington Irving, and had visited him at Sunnyside; now as the book was nearing publication, he sought Mr. Irving’s permission to dedicate to him the little volume. “Though I have a great disinclination in general to be the object of literary oblations and compliments,” replied Mr. Irving, “yet in the present instance I have enjoyed your writings with such peculiar relish, and been so drawn toward the author by the qualities of head and heart evinced in them, that I confess I feel gratified by a dedication, overflattering as I may deem it, which may serve as an outward sign that we are cordially linked together in sympathies and friendship.” With its sincere and delicately expressed letter of dedication, *Dream Life* was published in December 1851. “Its sale the first year,” wrote Mr. Mitchell, “went beyond that of the *Reveries*; but afterward kept an even range at about one-third less than that of its forerunner. And this proportion has held with curious persistence; no accident of sales having again carried its score up to that of the first book, or brought it more than a third below.” The relative proportion of sales mentioned by Mr. Mitchell has been likewise curiously persistent since he wrote the foregoing words in 1883.

<sup>1</sup> *Dream Life*, vi.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 203.



"*Dream Life* grew out of the *Reveries* even as one bubble piles upon another from the pipe out of which young breath blows them into bigness; and it was largely because the first floated so well and so widely that life and consequence were given to this companion book," were the apologetic words of Mr. Mitchell in 1883. "I am half ashamed at this late day," he continued, "to give so poor excuse for the writing of *Dream Life*; and every book should have a better reason for being wrought, than its good chance of catching a popular tide, and floating upon it to success. There is always danger of strain in work so undertaken and of weak duplication, and vague echoes of foregone things." We know that it was not alone the success of the *Reveries* that led to the production of *Dream Life*. It was rather the glowing heart of the man. The books were the outgrowth of the stresses to which for more than a score of years his soul had been subjected. He could have written others in similar strain without weak duplication. Indeed, he had planned one other to be called *Hearts of Girlhood*. As sketched by him, it was to be in four parts: "The Faint Hearted," "The Broken Hearted," "The False Hearted," "The True Hearted." Mr. Mitchell himself evidently had faith in his ability to write it. "If this book had been written, on the wave of success which attended the *Reveries* I have no doubt 't would have disputed claims with it," runs the note which more than fifty years after the notion had presented itself to him he placed on the margin of the page containing the preliminary outline of *Hearts of Girlhood*.

The great and immediate success of *Reveries* and *Dream Life*, the quick homage paid to the young author by people of all ages, and the extravagant devotion of girls and young women, were enough to turn the head of any but a man of



sound common sense and sterling character. From far distant States and Territories of the Union, from "the isles of the ocean," from France and Italy, from Norway and Sweden, from the heart of Germany, the mails brought to Ik Marvel striking testimony that he had touched the common heart of humanity. The "packet of letters" to which he refers in the "Second Reverie" received plentiful addition, and needed new and larger ribbons. In fact, the one packet grew to many, and the many continued to grow until death claimed the "Great Dreamer." Languishing Adas, and Claras, and Carries, and Jennies, and Dorothys, and Mary "darlings," showered him with valentines. Other and more ardent maidens wrote to inquire whether the author really was a bachelor; and, with the assurance that their hearts alone could understand and comfort that of Ik Marvel, coyly offered themselves in marriage. Much verse was dedicated to him. Young people wrote for advice and sympathy in their own love-affairs. The old wrote to testify that age and experience confirmed the words of his pen. One young French musician dedicated a polka to Ik Marvel. With the cool judgment of maturer life, Mr. Mitchell came to feel that he had been the recipient of "absurd overpraise," and was of the opinion that because of it he had been led to undervalue reputation.

An amusing sidelight is thrown upon this period of fevered success by letters of Louis Mitchell to Mary Goddard. These letters also impart the interesting information that a new and supposedly more enduring kind of work was being urged upon Donald. The two brothers, Louis and Alfred, were in Europe when *Reveries* was published, though they were not long in hearing echoes of its praise. Louis outwardly affected a scorn of sentiment, and loved to scoff

good-naturedly at what he called "Don's vaporings." He was just the man to sprinkle cool irony upon the heat and flame of a young author's distemper. From Rome, under date of January 22d, he wrote to Mrs. Goddard: "I sent Don some interesting information the other day through Henry Huntington to whom I took it into my head to write. . . . By the way, his book has now been out a month. How does it go? like hot cakes? . . . in case Henry Huntington should not receive my letter, tell Don that *Enrica is married*, and supposed by this time to be the mother of a young TURK. She is living in Constantinople. Alas, for romance! How I went off in laughing when my landlady (who knows her) told me that, you, Mary, can imagine, I fancy. Lucky Don didn't know it when he was cooking up the *Reveries*—eh?" Again, about the 1st of July 1851, he wrote from Paris: "I left Florence on the 1st of May . . . staid in Venice . . . three weeks; then by the steamer to Tristi; thence to the Grotto of Adelsburg where *Boldo told story*. It is a curious cavern, and interesting to those who see it after reading the same; but *more so* to those who have read the same *without seeing*. . . . I have seen Don's friend, Mr. Mann, who tells me Don has taken his stand among the first literary [men] of these times. . . . Don wouldn't make a good country squire, nor a merchant. The inevitable consequences of a wife are care and babies, and Don wouldn't like either after the first day or two. Can't he be persuaded to write something that will last? His *Reveries* are well enough in their way, but ten years hence they won't help him much. Let him write a history of Venice. He has the frame of it in his lecture. This, Mary, is between you and me. You know *how he'd look if he saw it*, especially just now with his laurels fresh and the dimes jingling in his pocket. No less true for

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all that, though. Huntington tried to start him on it before I left, and then he seemed to take the idea kindly enough. How it will be now, I don't know. As to marrying, keep him talking about it, and it will be all right enough."

The first large sales of the two little books diminished, of course, but they diminished only to settle down to a steady and widely extended circulation. In 1852 two separate, unauthorized editions were published in Great Britain. By 1853 two separate, unauthorized translations of *Reveries* appeared in Paris—one in the *Moniteur*, the other in *L'Illustration*. In 1856 Karl Elze included both volumes in Alphons Dürr's collection<sup>1</sup> of "Standard American Authors," in English; and in the same year a German translation by Ch . . . was published by Carl Meyer in Hanover. Both came to translation and wide circulation in many languages. In America, apart from those issued by the Scribners, Mr. Mitchell's authorized publishers, more than fifty totally different editions of both have been placed before the public.

Mr. Mitchell was seemingly embarrassed by the warmth of the reception accorded the little volumes, and came to speak of them apologetically. He evinced surprise at the manner in which they had touched the heart, at the hold they had taken upon the public, at their enduring life. He was in the habit of insisting that he had written "very much better books every way." His attitude, however, grew in part out of his natural diffidence; at bottom, he cherished a deep respect and affection for these children of his youth. Referring to the *Reveries* in 1883, he wrote: "I am not certain that I would blot out from staid people's knowledge what

<sup>1</sup> Published at Leipzig. *Reveries* was No. xv, *Dream Life* No. xvi, in the collection.

they may count the idle vagaries and wanton word-leaps and the over-tenderness of this book, even though I could. Whatever the astute critics may think, I do not and will not believe that the boisterous and scathing and rollicking humor of our time has blown all of pathos and all of the more delicate human sympathies into limbo.”<sup>1</sup>

In fact, he had strong belief in the honesties of the books, knowing well out of what stress of soul they had been born. “I wrote *Dream Life* while the glow was on,” he once told me; and there can be no doubt that in it he expressed what were at the time the burning convictions of his heart. Nor did he ever have reason to question the fundamental truth of what he had written. He had expected criticism, and had been sharply subjected to much, upon the publication of the *Reveries*. When, therefore, he wrote *Dream Life*, he took occasion to say a word in self-defense. “This is a history of dreams,” he began, “and there will be those who will sneer at such a history as the work of a dreamer.” And then he proceeded to explain that dreams as he conceived of them are the very substance of man’s truest life. “I can conceive no mood of mind more in keeping with what is to follow upon the grave, than those fancies which warp our frail hulks toward the ocean of the Infinite, and that so sublimate the realities of this being that they seem to belong to that shadowy realm whither every day’s journey is leading.”<sup>2</sup> He asked people to believe only that portion of his work which “counts most toward the goodness of humanity,” and

<sup>1</sup> See *Reveries*, xxii-xxiii. “I am now correcting proofs of the new edition of *Reveries*, the first volume of new issue of most of my books,” he wrote to his daughter Elizabeth in 1883. “Oh, it is *very young*—whatever the syntax be! If I were rich, I should be tempted to put it all in the fire; and yet—there are some good things in it.”

<sup>2</sup> See *Dream Life*, 5.

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that tends to the upbuilding of faith; strongly convinced himself that both books counted for goodness of life and strengthening of faith. "The man, or the woman, who believes well is apt to work well; and faith is as much the key to happiness here, as it is the key to happiness hereafter."<sup>1</sup> When the Nelsons brought out in Edinburgh an unauthorized edition of *Dream Life*, with the chapter on "Boy Religion" omitted, the omission displeased him perhaps more than the pirating of the book. "I could have wished," he wrote, "that the book had been altogether so good as to have justified them in making the theft complete, or altogether so bad as to have kept them honestly aloof." He believed in the truth and the efficacy of that particular chapter; and, I doubt not, considered it as well-nigh the most valuable in the book.

He did not like to regard these volumes as expressions of sentimentality, and that only; as pleasant fictions addressed to love-lorn swains and languishing maidens. It irritated him to have people refer to the pleasure they had taken in them in their "salad days"; he seemed to think such a remark to be in effect a slur. To be sure, he believed that in them he had spoken words of understanding, of sympathy, of consolation, from the deepest springs of his common humanity; but he believed no less strongly that he had likewise spoken words of courage, of hope, of inspiration, and of duty. He believed, in short, that the books contained that which would at all times appeal to the highest and the best qualities of human nature.

In his old age he was intensely gratified to learn that even after the lapse of forty-five years the spell of *Reveries* and *Dream Life* had not lost its hold upon such a man as Sir

<sup>1</sup> See *Dream Life*, 20.

## SATIRIST AND DREAMER

Robert Stout, New Zealand's famous jurist and statesman, upon whose estimate of the books Mr. Mitchell set much store. "These books," wrote Sir Robert, "are true literature, and as such demand not a hasty perusal, but repeated careful reading. They enter into the feelings of old and young; and to all a message is delivered. When it is remembered that both books were written by a young man, the staidness, the calmness, and the judiciousness of the writer will appear surprising."<sup>1</sup> And most careful readers will agree with the substance of Sir Robert's opinion that when we close such books, the profound truth of the oft-quoted lines of England's greatest dramatist—lines which Mr. Mitchell placed upon the title-page of *Dream Life* as a clew to its interpretation—come home to us:

We are such stuff  
As dreams are made of; and our little life  
Is rounded with a sleep.

Many thousands of men could bear witness, as many hundreds have done, to the inspirational power of these books. Young men have found in them impulses to higher and nobler living, wise counsels upon the problems of life, trumpet-calls to duty. How many have made such passages as the following mottoes for daily living, we shall never know:

He is a weak man who cannot twist and weave the threads of his feeling—however fine, however tangled, however strained, or however strong—into the great cable of Purpose, by which he lies moored to his life of Action.<sup>2</sup>

Life is calling for earnestness, and not for regrets.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "A Night with Two Old Books," in the *Press* of Christchurch, New Zealand, December 29th, 1902.

<sup>2</sup> *Reveries*, 55.

<sup>3</sup> *Reveries*, 119.



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The past belongs to God; the present only is ours. And short as it is, there is more in it and of it than we can well manage. That man who can grapple it, and measure it, and fill it with his purpose, is doing a man's work; none can do more; but there are thousands who do less.<sup>1</sup>

Stop not, loiter not, look not backward, if you would be among the foremost. The great Now—so quick, so broad, so fleeting—is yours; in an hour it will belong to the Eternity of the Past. The temper of life is to be made good by big, honest blows; stop striking and you will do nothing; strike feebly, and you will do almost as little. Success rides on every hour; grapple it, and you may win; but without a grapple, it will never go with you. Work is the weapon of honor, and who lacks the weapon will never triumph.<sup>2</sup>

You will learn . . . that there is no genius in life like the genius of energy and industry. You will learn that all the traditions so current among very young men that certain great characters have wrought their greatness by an inspiration, as it were, grow out of a sad mistake.<sup>3</sup>

Resolve is what makes a man manliest;—not puny resolve, not crude determination, not errant purpose; but that strong and indefatigable will which treads down difficulties and dangers as a boy treads down the heaving frost-lands of winter—which kindles his eye and brain with a proud pulse-beat toward the unattainable.<sup>4</sup>

In a pleasing tribute, Mr. James Lawler has called attention to this inspirational, this heartening, quality of Mr. Mitchell's work:

Yet, Strong Enchanter of the Hearth,  
To us thou never canst expire.  
Oft when our inward light is low,

<sup>1</sup> *Reveries*, 219.

<sup>3</sup> *Dream Life*, 134-135.

<sup>2</sup> *Reveries*, 237.

<sup>4</sup> *Dream Life*, 207-208.

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We'll gather 'round thy beech-wood fire  
To dream amid thy rods and books  
Of wider times and larger men,  
Till, heartened by thy sympathy,  
We buckle on our arms again.<sup>1</sup>

This is not the place to undertake a critical estimate of *Reveries* and *Dream Life*; such an estimate should be the work of a critic, not of a biographer. Popularity and great sales do not necessarily indicate true worth, nor are they any guaranty of enduring fame. It is perhaps too early to attempt an evaluation of these books. But this much can be said. The vitality which they have shown for now almost a century seems to indicate qualities that belong to enduring literature; qualities that men do not willingly allow to perish. The books are true to the best thoughts and emotions of humanity, and to that extent are beyond the power of time. Already they have become American classics. That which has kept alive the work of Izaak Walton, and Sir Thomas Browne, and Charles Lamb, and Washington Irving, will also keep alive the *Reveries of a Bachelor* and *Dream Life*. And by virtue of these books, Mr. Mitchell will rank along with his beloved Irving.

During the years 1850 and 1851, Mr. Mitchell had perhaps earned more with his pen than he could have earned in any other way. He now felt sure that if driven to it by necessity he could earn a livelihood by literature. As yet, however, he seemed to himself no nearer a choice of life-work than he was in 1849. As a first step toward a decision, he had in 1850 sold his Salem farm. He was planning to secure a country place to his liking upon which he could settle down and devote himself to farming and literature—

<sup>1</sup> See Mr. Lawler's "Ik Marvel," *Canadian Magazine*, February 1909.

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to farming primarily; to literature as a recreation and a delight. He was at the crest of his wave of fame. Society was seeking and flattering him. All circles were open. And yet, with all circles open, he knew not which way to turn. The future, however, was dawning before him more brightly than he knew.

## IX

### AN EVENTFUL TWELVEMONTH

A new book of hope is sprung wide open in my life: a hope of home!—*Reveries of a Bachelor*, 262.

The season of triumph which followed almost immediately upon the publication of *Reveries* and *Dream Life* undoubtedly interfered with creative work on the part of the author. It is certain, at least, that for several months, apart from his contributions to *Harper's*, Donald did not apply himself seriously to literature. Only in 1852 did he begin *The Fudge Papers* for the *Knickerbocker Magazine*. For several months after the publication of *Dream Life* he lived on in his usual unsatisfied, unsettled way, varying his place of residence from New York City to Norwich; or spending the time in travel.

As the summer of 1852 approached, his old restlessness having returned upon him, and his fancy being for the moment dulled, he decided to see Europe once more. While in New York arranging for his passage, he learned that Washington Irving, for the first time in many years, was enjoying a season at Saratoga Springs. He forthwith determined to see Mr. Irving for a few days before sailing. Once under the spell of Irving's spirit, it was but natural for Donald to linger. Where, better than at Saratoga, could the harmless vanities of a famous young bachelor-author be fed? To share the morning walks of Washington Irving, to be known as his friend, to be praised publicly by him, to be sought after on

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every hand—these were joys not to be quickly foregone, even by so retiring and modest a man as Mr. Mitchell.

The portrait by Charles Loring Elliott brings before us the features of the Ik Marvel who, during that Saratoga summer, enjoyed the culmination of his triumph. As we look upon it, there rises before us an image of a slender, active young man—not above medium height—with delicately moulded face, and large, dreamful blue eyes. About the shapely head fall brown masses of careless, wind-blown hair; and across the features lies an elusive half-shadow of sorrow. The clothes are tasteful, but loose and easy-fitting, as if designed for comfort rather than for looks. A large red silk scarf—expression of a lifelong love of color—helps us to understand why, as he flashed across the horizon of that fashionable society, he came to be called the “Comet’s Tail.” Morning after morning we see this young man strolling along the walk to the Spring in company with an older, more soberly dressed gentleman, whose face and eyes proclaim that he, too, is a dreamer and acquainted with grief. We listen to their conversation, watch the animated expression of their faces, hear their gay laughter. In the presence of the Elliott portrait we can forget the present and revive the past.

Among others who came from the South in those days to spend their summers at Saratoga were members of the family of William Bull Pringle, a rice-planter, of King Street, Charleston, and Society Hill, South Carolina. It must have been toward the end of July or the first of August that Mr. and Mrs. Pringle arrived at the Springs with their daughters, Mary Frances and Susan, and their niece, Susan Alston. Scarcely had they arrived, when a common friend rushed to Mary with the news that presumably should have been most



*JK manual*

*From a portrait of Mr. Mitchell by Charles Loring Elliot, painted about 1851.*





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interesting from a young woman's point of view: "Ik Marvel is here. Don't you want to meet him?" Miss Pringle, it seems, was not in search of literary lions. "No," she replied to the surprised friend, "I don't want to meet him. If he wants to meet me, very well." When this reply was reported to Donald, it quite naturally piqued his curiosity and aroused his interest. Unwittingly, she had spoken just the words to attract a man of his character. He sought an introduction, and was charmed by Miss Pringle's radiant beauty. That she was more than merely beautiful, each day revealed to him. Her strong common sense, her disdain of the methods usually employed by the fashionable butterflies who fluttered about the eligible, her tender and thoughtful devotion to her parents, disclosed to him the worth of her character. Almost before he knew it, his admiration had deepened into love. Europe vanished from his mind. To win the heart of this rare Southern girl now became his absorbing purpose. Under the watchful and benignant eyes of Washington Irving, the courtship proceeded.

The very name—Mary—aroused in Donald the tenderest emotions, and he was not long in pressing whatever advantage lay in the intimate relation which it had thus far borne to his own life. Within a few days he gave to Miss Pringle a copy of *Fresh Gleanings* bearing this inscription:

This first book of my author-life being dedicated  
to 'Mary,' seems, in so far, a fitting gift for my friend,

Miss Mary Pringle;

and I shall claim from her the same charity which  
her namesake has shown.

Dond G. Mitchell

Saratoga Springs,  
10 Aug. 1852.

"Ik Marvel."

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There, amid the pines of Saratoga, a new hope and a more compelling power than he had ever known were coming into his life. Little wonder that his memories of Saratoga never grew dim. "Is there an everlasting fountain of youth there upon the plains of Saratoga?" he asked, seventeen years later. "Or is it that an ever-new stream of bright, young faces is flowing thitherward, while we, looking on (even in picture) grow young again, and recall the gay old times when we quaffed the sparkling waters, when we sauntered under the heavy shadows of the pines, when we too could win a chance smile from some one of the provoking fair? Ah, well-a-day! The fountain flows forever—the bubble and the sparkle fail not; but the fresh young blood it feeds and exalts must come to its season of loitering, of heaviness, and of rest. But loiter as it may, most times it leaps once again with quick flow over the memory of young days at Saratoga."<sup>1</sup>

Toward the end of August the Pringles went on to Newport and Boston, and thence by way of Portland across the White Mountains. Donald, full of strange emotions—"feelings like half-forgotten memories, mystical, dreamy, doubtful"—followed in their wake. On the 12th of September, from Portland, Maine, he wrote to Mary Goddard. We can read between the lines of this letter as Mrs. Goddard at the time could not. She doubtless thought that Donald was wandering in his old spirit of restlessness; she knew nothing as yet of the new passion that was struggling in his soul. "Here I am," he wrote, "a long way to the northward, in a storm which will very likely pass for the equinoctial. My stay at Newport was for some ten days, and only so so, for *agreeability*. My old friends, the Pringles, were there. . . .

<sup>1</sup> "At the Spring; Saratoga," in *Hearth and Home* (August 28th, 1869), 568.

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I also saw, and passed a cozy forenoon with, Prof. and Mrs. Longfellow. He is a most agreeable man—nothing bookish about him—and Mrs. Longfellow is just what you might expect of Mary Ashburton, though not so pretty. I also dined very pleasantly with Mr. and Mrs. Bancroft, who showed me very kind attentions. . . . Whipple (the lecturer, etc.) was very kind in his attentions at Boston, asking me to dine, and calling once or twice. I also received an invitation to lecture before the Boston Mercantile Library. I returned a conditional answer. It is my purpose to go across the White Mountains from here, and thence down the Connecticut to Norwich by the close of the week. The Pringles are making the same town, although, strange to say, I have not met them since leaving Newport. I am getting just now thoroughly tired of wandering, and follow it up for the sake (partly) of giving myself a surfeit, and accumulating a stock of quiet content. Everybody asks me what work I am engaged upon, and I am sufficiently ashamed to plead guilty to—nothing.” Now and then it was his good fortune to catch a glimpse of Miss Pringle—sometimes on the mountains, sometimes in the busy streets of cities. It appears that his native shyness caused him to worship from afar; but he took care that an emissary now and then found its way to Miss Pringle. The inscription shows that on the 28th of September he gave her a specially bound copy of *Reveries*, illustrated by Darley. Evidently he felt confident that its leaven would work.

Only too soon did the delightful, tantalizing autumn pass, and the Pringles return to their Southern home. We can imagine the state of mind in which Donald turned to face the winter and its literary tasks. He struggled manfully for a time; but the Southland was calling, and he determined

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to go and put his fate to the touch. When, evidently unannounced, he reached Charleston in December, he was disappointed to find that Mary Pringle was away from home. He went on to Savannah and from there on the 23d of December wrote what was, in substance, a letter of proposal. All who have read with joy the letter to Margaret Boyne<sup>1</sup> will be glad to read the one into which Ik Marvel put not his fancy, but his whole self. Doubtless, as the two had strolled about the walks of Saratoga, or wandered over the free mountain spaces of New Hampshire, Donald had voiced the hope of one day preaching a sermon—a strictly private sermon—intended to do its hearer “good.” Frustrated in his attempt to deliver such sermon, he turned to the preparation of an epistle!

Pulaski House, Savannah.

23d Dec'r 1852.

I cannot pass altogether out of the reach of Charleston without wishing Miss Pringle a most ‘Merry Christmas,’ and without expressing my disappointment at not having found her in the city, and at being obliged to *write* a ‘sermon’ which I had hoped to whisper in her ear.

You surely must remember our talk of a ‘sermon;’—a sermon which, four or five successive times, I have tried to write; and have only failed of accomplishing, because I could not presume upon ‘doing you good.’

To this limitation, you will remember that you confined me: and in view of it, had I not a most narrow measure of hope?

But now you are away, and therefore I put upon paper what else I would most surely have whispered in your ear.

I know you for a true lady in all gentleness, and in all pride of feeling; and as such I need not say (for you know it) that I have admired you, and esteemed you, and loved you.

And now may I come back to Charleston in the hope of meeting

<sup>1</sup> See *Dream Life*, 232.

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you with such avowal on my lips? Or must I count your figure and manner and character only as a pleasant phantasm which has chased for a little while across the track of my vagrant and shadowy life?

I am sure that with your true womanly discernment you know very much of my character already; and I shall tell you nothing more here, except that I am full of all the petulancies, and passion, and ambition, and pride, which belong to an American of thirty years. Nor have I any greater fortune to bestow than will provide the comforts of a quiet country life:—saving only such as can be wrought (with God's help) out of this hand and brain.

You know me, Miss Pringle, too well to think that I would spend many words on what lies ever nearest to my heart. Do not, therefore, think me abrupt.

I know you well enough to feel sure that your hand will never go where your heart does not wholly follow; and, if you write me that you love your southern home too well to leave it ever, I will bear the disappointment as stoutly as I can, and sincerely hope (as I do now) that God may bless you always!

Most truly yours,

Donald G. Mitchell.

To Miss Mary F. Pringle.

P.S. A letter addressed to "Care of P. M. Judson, Esq., Macon, Geo.," will reach me there, or follow me to N. Orleans.

Very truly D. G. M.

Miss Pringle's reply gave him grounds for hope. As soon as his Southern wanderings could be conveniently terminated, he hastened to Charleston. His pleadings were not in vain; and there, on the 1st of February 1853—the anniversary of her birth—in the historic old King Street home, he placed his ring upon Miss Pringle's finger. Of course, the first information went to Mary Goddard. "You will be surprised to find me here," he wrote on the evening of the 1st,



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“and still more surprised to hear that Miss Mary Pringle—than whom there is no lovelier person in the world—wears an engagement ring of my giving! For the present keep this strictly in confidence. My only doubts and fears about the matter are whether I am worthy of her and can really make her happy. If you *can* say anything that will encourage me in this belief, pray do. I *know* that you will love her devotedly when you know her, just as I know she will love you. She is not rich—at least she brings me no fortune; yet she gives up a home full of luxury and every charm of life to go where I may decide. Her father regrets that my home will not be here, and does not favor much the idea of my living in a small town of Connecticut. Two things would draw me strongly to Norwich; first and greatest, your presence there, and next the great beauty of the position. Whatever home I take, I do want to make *famous* for its beauties, and, with God’s leave, I will make so. It is with some base regrets that I give up forever the thought of obtaining through marriage a property that I might spend in elegancies; but I am sure that good judgment, honesty, and good intent, confirm the course I have chosen. I have got a life of work before me, but I feel able to do it. If luxury had been supplied to me without effort, I fear I should have done very little. Life is not very long to be lived, after all; and what will make its end pleasantest must be the thought of honest and *hearty* work. For your sake, too, seeing that I might have assisted you somewhat, I could have wished that fate might have ordered differently; but still I will do for you what I can. In honest and sisterly sympathy I am sure that you will find in this new Mary, all you could wish; and in the possession of a most true and loving heart, I feel richer than very many with millions, and very much richer than I deserve.”

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Before leaving Charleston, he wrote one more letter to Mrs. Goddard, under date of February 5th. "Your last *did* find me in Charleston—a very contented lingerer—albeit the hotels were at the fullest, and my room execrable. You will readily believe that there must have been some outside influence to keep down the worry of my spirit—and there was. You know that I used to speak to you in terms of praise (which you half smiled at) of that other Mary who lives here; but all that praise was tame, compared to the estimate which I now have of her character. I cannot, nor shall I attempt to describe her to you. I *know* that you will love her; and I know that I love her more than I believed I could ever love anyone. Don't put this down for the extravagant flourish of one who is ensnared by a pretty face, or who is bewildered by excitement. I am as cool now (as I write you) as ever under the old porch in the shadow of the trees of Elmgrove! My only doubt and only fear is that I am not worthy of so much gentleness, and truth, and dignity; and that I cannot make her happy. This fear almost haunts me. You know how I have worried you many a time by my petulance, and seeming selfishness; and you know that my unkindness (more apparent than real) has once or twice brought tears to your eyes. Now if I thought that I should so wrong, so sweet and so confiding a nature as I *know* is now bound to mine, I should almost relent even now, and wish to break the tie which seems to me a new life. Do you think that I can be trusted? If ever I am living near you, I shall hope and insist that you will reproach me for whatever seems a forgetfulness of *her* pleasure who will 'for better or for worse' tie her fate to mine."

Regretfully he found himself once more in New York and Norwich wrestling with the duties of every-day life. "My

work chains me to-day," he wrote Miss Pringle (March 2d, 1853); "and after so long idlesse, and so enthralling thoughts as have latterly belonged to me, I find it very hard to give my mind to the commonplaces of an 'Easy Chair,' or the insipidities of 'Fudge.'" *The Fudge Papers* ran in the *Knickerbocker Magazine* from January 1852 to November 1854. Such faults of structure and style as the work exhibits—and the author himself felt they were many—must be ascribed to the conditions under which it was produced. It is asking too much of any author to write a masterpiece during the season of courtship and honeymoon.

During those winter and spring months of 1853, the best of Donald's thoughts were occupied with the future; the best of his energies given to planning for it. An almost daily correspondence with Miss Pringle helped to reconcile him to distance and absence. It may be well to say a word about this correspondence. It was not literary like that of Elizabeth Barrett and Robert Browning. As might be expected in one of Mr. Mitchell's nature, his love-letters were for the most part strongly individual, intended for the eye of but one. There cannot be gathered from them long paragraphs of literary criticism, or clever comments upon the men and the events of the period. The letters of both lovers were written from the heart, not from the intellect; they are tenderly and sweetly beautiful with that kind of beauty which fades in the strong light of blazing noon. Apart from a few extracts, therefore, they shall remain where Mr. Mitchell would wish them to remain—safe from the eyes of the curious. Such extracts as are given have been chosen for the light which they throw upon Mr. Mitchell's character; for the manner in which they reveal the sources of that restlessness which harassed him for years, the spirit

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in which he approached marriage, the plans which were forming in his mind, and those quick alternations of joy and gloom which marked his life. I shall arrange them in order:

*To Mary Frances Pringle.*

(NEW YORK, *March 1st and 2d*, 1853.)—The sight of New York extravagance and brilliancy again, in no way heightens my desire to follow in its train; but rather confirms my hope and desire for that even and tranquil quietude which comes from a happy home where trees and flowers befriend us.

Ever that image of a modest cottage rich in all that makes life dear, floats before my vision; and ever, in the vision, your face and figure float, commending it fourfold to my heart, and quickening my intent to make it real.

Your letter is altogether like you—earnest and full of that warmth of feeling which, in you, I love so much. Not a poetic, or a *Blanche Amory* glow, that goes out in the expression; but one pure and steady “like an anthracite fire.” Read the chapter<sup>1</sup> and *believe* it all written to you, and my heart written in it, and over it.

(NEW YORK, *March 4th*, 1853.)—What do you say to the broker business? Fancy it thus:

D. G. Mitchell  
No. 10 Wall Street  
Bill Broker and General Agent  
For Negotiating Loans, etc.  
Terms Moderate  
June 1, 1853.

Or supposing me keeping by the poet's calling, can you imagine yourself reading some day or other a newspaper paragraph run-

<sup>1</sup> See *Reveries of a Bachelor*, 69-86.

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ning this way: "We understand with pain that the accomplished sentimental writer, Mr. Mitchell (better known as Ik Marvel) is in very reduced circumstances. Some few friends have undertaken a subscription in his behalf. A paper has been left at our office and we would invite the charitably disposed to contribute something toward the relief of his impoverished family."!!!

But no, my dearest Mary, as God is good and watchful over the humblest who call Him King, labor—pleasant labor (beguiled by your sweet face and your sunniest of smiles)—will make for us a quiet and a beaming home, rich in the shade of trees, in the perfume of flowers, in the song of birds, and in that grateful presence of *the loved one*, which shall crown its charms.

I love to talk to you on such an evening as this—a snowy, wintry evening—cold, heavy, cheerless—such an evening as by and by your presence will *always* brighten—such an evening as shall witness those fire-side joys which have hung mistily and distant upon the *horizon* of my life, always—until now. Now they are so near that I dread lest they be unreal.

Looking to-day over a list of advertised places for sale, I found hundreds, at all distances from the city, of all sizes, from \$6,000 to 30,000. I grow much into your father's opinion, that it is best to take all things very quietly. Do tell me very freely and fully anything that may occur to you in connection either with a permanent home, or our 'whereabouts' for the summer. New York is, I fear, going to be *terribly* full after the 1st of May. I hear that rooms are even now engaged for May and June. Never mind, the world is wide; and if we find no comfort here, we can seek it in some cozy nook of the 'Old Country,' and loiter down the park glades (where Carry loitered)<sup>1</sup> of green old England!

There is (as you say) confidence and hope and trust and *knowledge* that love and faith are mutual; and with God's favor, will be so, until He shall part us!

<sup>1</sup> See *Reveries of a Bachelor*, 185-190.

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I *do* look longingly forward to the day when in place of this solitary bachelor-room in a dim and dreary hotel, you will lighten my hearth and home with that cheery face, and give me such joys as have truly lived only in "reverie."

This harsh March forewarns me (not unpleasantly) that you will find me a willing victim to any future designs you may have of winter campaigns towards your own sunniness of season.

You see I run on, talking most disjointedly and immethodically, just as if your own sweet self were here, and as if my arm still clasped you. You will pardon it all then, and believe strongly, and stronger than ever before, how dearly I love you, and how hopefully.

(NORWICH, CONN., *March 15th*, 1853.)—I keep my eye upon all the places advertised, and so soon as the weather is warmer, shall make a running search—not with a view to immediate purchase, but that I may have some data whereby to regulate our summer life.

Have you read *My Novel* of Bulwer's, and what think you of the character of Helen? and do you remember toward the close some such mention as this: "the life of a *metropolis* is essential to the healthful intuition of a writer, in the intellectual wants of the age." It may be true of passionate and dramatic novel-writing; but of calmer works, whether historical or descriptive, I cannot believe it to be true: I do not want to believe it true. Time was—not long since—when I craved the noise and bustle of the city to stimulate my energies, and to drive away from [me] a sense of social want. But, dear Mary, with your image rising on my future so pleasantly as it does, and blessing as it does daily, my vision of a home, distractions are needless; and I shall hope to find in your smile and your wish, enough to wake my energies and to gladden my labor.

The road to Runnymede is, I suppose, now flowered with jessamines, and the grass green upon the lawn, and the sky as blue and soft as when we strolled under the moss-draped oaks. And



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the initials (unfinished) upon the holly-tree? Do they stand yet; and do you wish as truly as I for the time when they will stand completed, and we be as near in fact as we are now in thought?

(NORWICH, CONN., *March* 17th, 1853.)—Well, is it not odd that here at my desk, the scene of hard and much heart-less work, I should be dashing off these little sheets—‘love letters’—to one who six months ago I saw for the first time in light muslin dress promenading upon the clean corridors of Mr. Marvin’s United States Hotel; and a month later wearing ‘snuffy brown’ dress and odious ‘fright’ upon the mountains of northern New England!

(NORWICH, CONN., *March* 21st, 1853.)—This life of ours is a strange, perplexed riddle; and when we have most reason to enjoy, and our horizon is brightest, Providence tempers the joy with thick-coming anxieties. It is a work-day world, and those pleasures are greatest, after all, which spring from the consciousness of work accomplished and duty performed. Am I turned sermonizer? Don’t let me bring a shade across that cheerful face of yours, I beg. And not for this time only, do I beg it, but always. *Do* let that bright spot of God’s sunshine glow for me to the end! With that always before me, I shall grow—if not better, at least more hopeful!

I have not ventured thus far to arrange anything definitely, hoping to have some more decided hint of your wishes, more especially with reference to the European trip. I think we might pass six months in Europe at a cost of \$3,000. This would involve a bit of trenching upon capital, but not to such amount as would frighten me. . . . It might well be that an ocean trip, and a re-visiting of old scenes, would stir my sluggish brain into some quicker musings than belong to it now; and I know I should dearly love to point out to *you* (as Paul did to Carry) the scenes familiarized by my early and vagabond pilgrimages. If, then, your heart is aglow to look down on the valleys of Switzerland, and to listen to my *rigmarole* of the old events, and of the sunshine (how colder!)



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which shone on me then—tell me so, and let us go, and I will take tickets for the Cunarder (as you prefer) of the 1st June.

(NORWICH, CONN., *March* 28th, 1853.)—I don't know about Mrs. Julius Pringle's prognostic of a New York life. I fancy she must love that city better than either you or I. It seems to me now as if some *very* strong necessity would be required to draw me away from a country cottage home, lit up with your cheerful face. How seems it to you, dear Mary?

When, indeed, you are cheerful no longer, and the comparative isolation shall have worn the smile from your face, then it shall be the city, or whatever else may relieve the tedium of the quiet life; but we will stave that off a long way.

I feel almost as if I could fall easily into my old trick of farming—but of this another time.

You ask after copyright: Its fate, I think, is very uncertain—so uncertain that I do not allow myself to feel interested at all; and even in the event of its passing, I do not hope for very much benefit. Ah, dear Mary, you have chosen a sadly poor profession—'vagabonds,' as you say, by appetite and habit; and only strong—in feeling. However, you know I boast myself a farmer—a sort of first love the farm was to me; and if worst comes to worst, I *know* I could win a livelihood at old-fashioned farm work.

I enclose . . . a feeble little blossom of heliotrope from my cousin's plant; it means—devotion!

I do think, Molly, that you would love to have a run over the ocean, and through some of the soft glades of England. I do think, too, that you would pick up thereabout a great many hints which would go to beautify and make tasteful any future Elmgrove. Therefore, I shall make my arrangements in view of a summer's absence—unless some such opportunity (Micawber-wise) should turn up for house and grounds as would warrant the adjournment of the Europe trip.

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You ask what my publisher says? And do *you*, who forbid me to consult yourself, hint at my consulting *him*? No, then, he does not like my running off. He would like me to take a room in his store 12 ft. x 8, one desk, one chair, one stone pitcher, six pens, and two reams of paper. He would advise me to keep there the rest of the summer, running up in the country to see you once a week; and in the winter, once a month. Pray, shall I follow his advice? If you do not hurry your reply, I shall *probably* accept his propositions.

(NORWICH, CONN., *April* 10th, 1853.)—One of the places at Newburgh has now upon it only a workingman's cottage (one story, three rooms), and I quite horrified Mr. Headley by saying that, by adding one room and bathing conveniences, I should count it, under a canopy of vines, very inhabitable! Would you have been horrified, Molly? He thought it might be turned into a gate-lodge! But, please God, dear Molly, I hope to be able always, to open with my own hands, all the gates to any home of ours!

Do I frighten you? I told you, I think, of my visiting Mr. Downing's; a rare instance of what taste can accomplish upon a very common-place landscape. And yet Mr. Downing made the great mistake of building too magnificently for his means; perhaps his profession as architect compelled it; but the pretentious house compelled also a general and *splendid* hospitality which, at his death, has involved a sale of house, furniture, books, and left his widow—poor. Hospitality can be just as honest and heart-felt under a low roof as a high one; and I remember that I took the kindness of Mr. Irving very closely to heart when he showed me into a little chamber scarce twelve feet square, with one little diamond-paned window, and only white dimity curtains, and the Melrose ivy-leaves fluttering against the casement—just as closely to heart as Gov. Manning's kindness in his palace of Clarendon!

As for my own employment—brain-wise—for the year to come, my publisher is more anxious than I. To write a flimsy book

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(though it might produce revenue), it is hard to make up my mind. *He* (my publisher) doesn't give me a moment's peace in his counting-room; and varies his appeals most amusingly—first to my pride, then avarice, then fear, then vanity, etc. "Give me a book," he says, "before you go, and I will warrant you enough to build a house when you come back." The Harpers (if I go abroad) want a series of foreign sketches, for which they offer very large pay. But of all this I think very much less, dear Molly, than of you and of your home: that is my book now; and the whole type-world is typed in you.

(*Undated.*)—I enclose a fragment from one of Mr. Scribner's letters, showing his book-thirstiness. The first part, which I do not send, warns me of shortening sales and revenue, unless I keep up the demand by some novelty. The "Work-day Sermons," or "Sermons for Work Days," hinted at, is a book, long had in contemplation, of essays written sermon-wise upon "Landscape Gardening," "Spending of Money," "Beauty," "Architecture," "Trees," "Travel," and mayhap, "Marriage!" This book, with the one already named in previous letter, and the "Fudge," are all that lie in the way of direct taking hold of the *magnum opus*, Venetian History.

(NORWICH, CONN., *April* 12th, 1853.)—One thing we will do, dearest Molly, whether our home be in one place or another; in one state or other; and whether we cross one sheet of water or another sheet of water; and whether we stroll in Notre Dame or in Calvary Church: we will look at life *brightly* and broadly, and be forgiving of what failings or shortcomings we find—whether in places, in pence, or in people; we will not narrow our thoughts to one bit of the world, or think that all is good in one place, or all bad in another; and we will live hopefully and earnestly, counting it all God's world, and we—His creatures, to battle it away on the fighting field where He has put us, with stout hands and hearts—taking what comfort we can from the world and from each other;

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and living so as not greatly to fear the time (save for the separation) which will change the scene, and transfer us to that Great Future which lies the other side of graves. Pray pardon my sermonizing.

(NORWICH? *April* 27th (or 28th), 1853.)—A very kind letter from Mr. Irving, of recent date, speaks in a way (of you) that I shall not start your vanity by telling. He speaks, too, of your mother's seeming more like an elder sister, than a mother.

Life is not very long, you know, at the longest, and the griefs are thick upon it. But it may be made large with large and earnest purposes; and it may be made happy by goodness of intent and action.

Molly, let us look the sunshine in the face! I am not given to that way of looking; rather prone am I, from the misfortunes of my boyhood, which broke a large family into shattered and feeble fragments, and devastated a loved hearth by death on death, to somber musings; but, Molly, let me now look hopefully through your eyes; and through your heart grow back into that old fragrance of a home which has lingered (only lingered) around me always, like the faint perfume which stays where flowers have been!

When, late in April a decision to visit Europe had been reached, Donald determined to seek a consular post, and on his way to Charleston visited Washington to make application in person. It was his good fortune while there to meet Nathaniel Hawthorne, who, as classmate and warm friend of the new President, Franklin Pierce, made the way for the applicant "easy and flowery."<sup>1</sup> This new experience of Washington life did not quicken in him any political aspirations; on the contrary, it seems to have deepened his antip-

<sup>1</sup> See Mr. Mitchell's reminiscences in *American Lands and Letters*, 2.151-152.

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athies, and to have turned him definitely from all thoughts of active participation in public affairs. From his Washington letters to Miss Pringle, I have made a few extracts:

(*April 30th and May 1st, 1853.*)—Again, my dearest Molly, I find myself in my little chamber, pen in hand, very sure that I shan't [displease] you by relieving my solitary hours by writing even such poor scrawl as my pen makes.

The truth is, I have stolen away to my room to avoid a noisy supper, to which I was invited, given by the fastest of Young Americas; to wit, the editor of the *Democratic Review*, the candidate for the Constantinople Ministry, the Col. May of Mexican memory, and also (though not of the same *rabid* politics) Mr. Hawthorne. I pity him! He told me to-day that some men possessed a kind of magnetic influence over him which he could not resist, however it might lead him. . . .

They will be drinking champagne and singing songs—perhaps even too far gone for that—when I will be dreaming pleasantly of a certain cottage adorned by a certain presence!

Oh, this horrible Washington—haunt of everything worst; and yet with so much that is attractive, and keeping within its bounds such capacity for good and for evil!

But I won't sermonize till to-morrow. No, Molly, I won't travel Sunday, but shall certainly set off either on Monday or on Tuesday evening. I know you wouldn't have me travel on Sunday even *home-ward*.

*Sunday morning.* . . . I have been wandering about the city for two hours this morning, listening to the southern singing birds, and waiting for the church doors to open; even now three-quarters of an hour remain to the commencement of service. I shall guard myself with your *Prayer Book* against the Puseyite tendencies of Mr. —.

It is a sad place, this Washington: compassing within its borders more hard drinking, more swearing, more vulgarity, more presump-

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tion, more impudence, than any place I ever fell upon in the world. Gen. Cushing, to whom I was presented by Mr. Hawthorne yesterday, is a very good-looking, prompt, gentlemanly man; and spoke to Mr. Hawthorne of my appointment to the Mediterranean as certain if I urged it.

I find that the Consulate at Venice is worth nothing to speak of; that at Leghorn is worth from \$900 to 1,500 a year: the place itself is not agreeable, nor are there libraries nearer than Pisa. The Genoese Consulate offers a pleasant city to reside [in], and is worth from 1,000 to \$1,600 a year (*à ce qu'on dit*).

My present determination is not to thrust myself among the office-hungry by seeming to linger here for appointment. I shall simply convey to Mr. Cushing a knowledge of my literary intent—of my object in asking a place—of my unwillingness to interfere with any political preferment; but simply shall suggest that, as a literary man, if he sees any place available that may further my designs without prejudice to any political friends of the administration, to give me information. This course will leave any possible appointment subject for south-parlor consideration, and will not bind Molly to my expatriation *d'avance*. . . .

—I have just returned from hearing Mr. —: sad specimen of a clergyman! Yet they tell me he is very much admired. He should have been tragic pantomimist upon the French stage, and then he would have reached (possibly) mediocrity!

I know this is hard talking of a preacher; but the pulpit is *the one* place where affectation is to me not only unpardonable, but absurd, wicked, outrageous, and intolerable; and when I see a man under the sacred duties of such a calling, and with voluntary assumption of that close relation to the Deity, exhibiting the graces—not of Christ—but of himself, my contempt lacks words to measure it.

I like modesty in every station; but above all I like it where to be modest is not so much a virtue as a decency. The church altar seems to me *just that place*. . . .



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This is perhaps the last letter I shall write you in years! How strange! God grant that we have need of few letters; but that we may read each other's lives and wishes so fully and fairly—each in each—that no machinery of letters will be wanted!

And now, my *bachelor* letters to you are done, and my bachelor life (in effect) is done, too. Henceforward, our responsibility to the world and the dread Future, blends in one. Let us wear it hopefully, joyously (if it may be), and always trustful of better things to come!

May 2d, 1853. —only a word, for the mail is near closing.

I shall leave to-morrow at 9 P. M., whether-or-no. I only stay out of courtesy to the numerous friends I have met here. Gov. Marcy says to me only an hour ago, "You are the only man I have *asked* to stay another day in Washington." Mrs. Marcy (though I only met her to-day) expressed an interest in you, and a wish to see you. What will you say to a return this way?

*Don't* fear my *alliance* to politics, or things political. I am more and *more* disgusted with everything of the sort.

I saw the President to-day on a private interview in company with Mr. Hawthorne. He is a *very* pleasant man—well-intentioned, I think, and *thoroughly* earnest.

On the 24th of May Donald's commission as consul of the United States of America for the port of Venice and the Adriatic ports of the Lombardo-Venetian kingdom was issued. One week later, he and Miss Pringle were married in the King Street home, Charleston. The public took more than a passing interest in the marriage of the famous bachelor-dreamer, and the blessings of thousands followed the two young people. "Your honeymoon," wrote George Bancroft prophetically, "can have no last quarter." After a few days of travel and a visit with Mary Goddard in Norwich, they sailed for Liverpool on the *Arctic*, June 25th, 1853.

## X

### HOME FIRES ON EUROPEAN HEARTHS

Our little household machinery works capitally; and our fourth-floor parlor, with its growing accumulation of odd bits of old oak, odd vases and pictures, and lighted up now by a cheery October flame in the chimney, is looking quite home-like.—D. G. M. to William B. Pringle, from Paris, October 30th, 1854.

There can be little doubt that Donald's chief reason for going to Europe was to revisit in company with his bride the scenes of his former travel. He wanted to see once more the beauties of the countryside, and with his eyes upon them to make note of such features as later on he might adapt to home-making of his own. To be sure, he half convinced himself that a history of Venice was his objective, and he certainly hoped that such a journey might, as he said, "stir his sluggish brain into some quicker musings"; but the itinerary followed and the course of events reveal the truth. He went up and down the avenues of Great Britain and the Continent with sketch-book in hand. No beautiful design of gateway, or porch, or chimney, or gable, or window, or fireplace escaped his attention. The little book which he carried lies now before me. Its daintily colored sketches speak as eloquently as words of the hearty devotion that went into their making; and it is easy to see that they are the sources of inspiration upon which he later drew. Good, honest investigation of Venetian history he indeed made; but throughout the months of travel and study, the image of

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that home to which he had so long looked forward, kept rising before his fancy.

The *Arctic* reached Liverpool on the 6th of July. For three months thereafter the young people travelled leisurely, following for the most part the trails which Donald knew so well. In October they reached Venice, where Mr. Mitchell settled down to the discharge of the slender consular business and to historical studies. A considerable portion of his correspondence during this period remains, chiefly letters to Mary Goddard. I have made such extracts as enable us to follow the fortunes of the travellers during the months of their European residence:

### *To Mary Goddard.*

(GENEVA, *September* 9th, 1853.)—Your kind, but too short favor reached me here only a day or two ago, being, with the exception of one from Dr. Barker, the only friendly letter I have received since my departure. . . . Mary is very well, indeed, and has made one or two of the high mountain passes with me on mule and foot. . . . I need not tell you that our trip has been a pleasant one. Indeed, nothing has occurred in any way to mar it, save the rush and crowd of travel, which has obliged us very often to take inferior quarters, and of course to submit to imposition. . . . The weather has been generally fine, but within a few days has kept us housed.

Our trip was first through North Wales, thence to London; thence to Edinburgh by Derbyshire, the Lake Counties, etc., to Loch Lomond, Stirling, York, London again, the Isle of Wight, Calais, Brussels, Aix la Chapelle, Cologne, Mayence, Baden, Basle, Zurich, Lucerne, Interlaken, Berne, Vevay, Geneva. Only Chamonix remains of Switzerland; and it is even doubtful if I do not run away without seeing that, reserving it, however, for some future time.

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I have grown sadly lazy in respect of writing, so that even a letter drags heavily; but I hope to make a reform when I am once settled quietly in my quarters at Venice.

The sight of English farms has quickened all my old tastes, and I want when I go back, room and verge enough to work out something in that way.

(VENICE, *October* 22d, 1853.)—I wrote you, I can't say how many weeks since; but certainly some time since the receipt of your last; so that whereas I have heard from you but a single time, this is at least my *third* writing to you. This is doing a good deal for a newly-married man, and above all for one so engrossed and perplexed as I have been since my arrival here, with looking out for rooms, and servants, and all the *et ceteras* of housekeeping; for to almost literal housekeeping are we reduced. First and foremost, the Consulate is worth nothing in any way; neither in money, nor, in view of the present feeling of the Austrian authorities toward America, is it worth anything for its position. Of course, I shall only stay so long as I am obliged to stay to finish what reading I must do here: this I hope to do by April or May, when I shall go either to Florence or to Paris; in either of those places I can live much cheaper and better than here.

We have now very comfortable quarters and good sized rooms, besides a little kitchen and two servant's rooms, which we hire with furniture, linen, crockery, etc., and also use of a garden abutting upon the Grand Canal. We keep a gondolier who acts also as servant, waiter, and almost everything else. A cook we are now on the outlook for, but are at present provided from the kitchen of our host.

I am thoroughly disappointed in the cost of living here, and in the agreeableness of it, though perhaps this last is not so much to be regretted, as it will add to my disposition to keep at my books and my work. I feel as if I had wasted two good years which I must repair as soon and as well as I can. . . .

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Mary, as you may well suppose, is delighted with the new things she sees; and is always the same as when you saw her—making friends of everybody, and beguiling me, I daresay, into very much more of idleness than is either proper or becoming.

(VENICE, *November ?* 1853.)—We are still here living very cozily in cozy quarters, Mary playing the housewife better even than I could have fancied. But we are both fairly out of patience with the cheating and lying habit of everybody with whom we are brought in contact; and were we not just now trammelled by rooms which we cannot rid ourselves of, we should leave instant for either Florence or Paris. I do assure you that much as I have seen of foreign knavery, the Venetians have inspired in me a more thorough contempt than I could have believed possible.

We shall leave here, I think, in March or April; but whether for Florence or Paris is still undecided. I do not count on being home much before the summer of 1855. Still, if possible, shall make my return earlier. I am pushing on somewhat in Venice (the history), but it is a long and a dull task. I want *very* much to get a little box of my own, where I can smoke and work by my own fire.

We are all anxiously waiting every day's news here from the war-country. There are sad and very decided fears that the trouble may spread over Europe. If so, I may run away, even with Venice incomplete.

The winter here is very severe; and as I write, heavy snow is lying on all the roofs, and on the borders of the canals.

(VENICE, *November* 18th, 1853.)—You would be amused and surprised to find how many of the old Norwich luxuries Mary has revived for me here; such as a true dish of baked beans, and most delicious quince marmalade—prepared, this last, by her own hands. Indeed, I did not know what a *provider* I had found in a wife until I had entered upon this little trial of housekeeping. Without her, I believe I should have gone crazy here; as every Italian is a knave,

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there is no society, the chimneys smoke (though we hope that may be cured <sup>1</sup>), and the Consulate, instead of being an advantage, is rather the contrary. The gross fees are about \$150 a year. I have already given notice of my intention to resign, and shall probably in the spring go either to Florence or to Paris. All the great libraries will be equally serviceable to me, and there is nothing *accessible* here which may not be found in Paris or in Florence.

I am budging very, very slowly with my history, partly through the hanging on of the last year's laziness, and partly from the example of lazy habit in the people around me.

My old farming likings revive more and more in this city of waters. Read Flagg's book and let me know how you like it. I had before heard of Motley's endeavor, but I do not think he will make a popular book. An Englishman has also been engaged here for many years on studies connected with Venice—with a view to ultimate publication, I suppose. It will be my endeavor, therefore, to make my history more practical, so to speak, than erudite. I want to finish it before returning, so as to turn my hand to something else.

Although Mr. Mitchell was reappointed to the Venice consulate on the 28th of February 1854, his letter of resignation had already gone forward to Washington on the 14th. The manner in which the consular service was conducted had grown utterly distasteful to him, and in resigning he did not hesitate to speak plainly in regard to what he strongly felt were needed reforms. In accepting the resignation (March 18th), Mr. Marcy, the secretary of state, thanked him for "the important suggestions in reference to the Consular system of the United States." It is worth while to say that within a few years material changes in the system were made in line with the suggestions put forward by Mr. Mitchell.

<sup>1</sup> There is humorous record of the "curing" in *Bound Together*, 224-228.



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In after years, Mr. Mitchell greatly enjoyed making humorous reference to his consular experiences. "Julius Cæsar was a consul," he wrote, "and the first Bonaparte; and so was I. . . . For myself, consular recollections are not, I regret to say, pleasant. I do not write 'Ex-United States Consul' after my name. I doubt if I ever shall. . . . I have no objection to serve my country; I have sometimes thought of enlisting in the dragoons. I am told they have comfortable rations, and two suits of clothes in a year. But I pray Heaven that I may never again be deluded into the acceptance of a small consulate on the Mediterranean." <sup>1</sup>

Upon their removal to Paris late in February, Mr. and Mrs. Mitchell settled down to permanent home life in a cozy little fourth-floor apartment at 8 Rue du Luxembourg, where they remained until mid-April 1855. Here they saw much of home friends and relatives. Henry Huntington, who had recently established his bachelor home in the Rue de la Bruyère, was within reach. Mr. Mitchell's brother Louis, and Mrs. Mitchell's sister Susan and Uncle Robert Pringle, brought a comradeship of kin that prevented homesickness. A part of Donald's first Paris letter to Mary Goddard follows:

(8 RUE DU LUXEMBOURG, *April* 9th, 1854.)—Your letter of February reached us here only a few days ago, having been forwarded from Venice. . . . On leaving Venice I had half a mind to establish myself at Florence until my history was done; but on hearing bad accounts of the summer heats, and finding no very enjoyable rooms, we decided to come on to Paris, where we shall remain *certainly* until autumn, and very probably until a year from this time. We are pleasantly situated, not far from the garden of the Tuileries; and have a *salle à manger*, parlor, bed-room, work-

<sup>1</sup> "Account of a Consulate," in *Seven Stories*, 75-127.

## THE LIFE OF DONALD G. MITCHELL

room for me, and kitchen with beds for the servants—cook and maid. Of course, we are at housekeeping, as we were at Venice. Expenses are very much higher, but opportunities for my writing are better than there.

. . . I have become more persuaded that I shall take a place where I can have land about me, when I get back. Indeed, I am almost inclined to think of farming in earnest, or of giving up writing altogether. Still, I am looking out for books, and mean to have a good library about me wherever I may be, already having increased my stock some two or three hundred volumes.

The history drags on very slowly—partly by reason of my eyes, which I harmed by late reading of old Italian type in Venice, and have been obliged here to consult a physician, and shorten my reading very much. In other respects, I am quite well.

On the 5th of June 1854, their first child, a daughter, was born. The happy father hastened to inform Mary Goddard of the event. "The child is large, with brown hair, and dark blue eyes," he wrote on the following day. "The nurse says it is a 'noble child.' Of course it is!"

As the summer of 1854 approached its end, Mrs. Mitchell's parents, eager for a sight of their daughter after her long absence, urgently advised a turning homeward in the autumn. A part of Donald's reply to the father, Wm. B. Pringle, sets forth the reasons which caused them to prolong their stay:

(October 30th, 1854.)—You know that the work I am upon involves a sort of attention which is no way reconcilable with *change*; and with books and opportunities about me, it would seem exceedingly injudicious to fling them all away after only a single summer's acquaintance. I regret very much a necessity which compels Mary's longer absence from home; but a winter at longest is not very long; the baby will be stronger for the voyage; we shall meet

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(God willing) spring warmth on the Atlantic coast; and at the latest shall hope to reach Charleston by the first of May. Mary will continue her visit there as long as Mrs. P[ring]le may think prudent, while I am on the search for some habitable quarter at the North. I still think of a country life within arm's length of the town, where we may find quiet, good air, and such surroundings of trees, flowers, and shade as may perhaps tempt some of your roving family to pay us a summer visit.

I have little hope of finishing the historic work I am upon while here; but hope to get through the ugliest part of the task, in collection of notes and comparison of authorities: if I complete the whole within a year thereafter, I shall be quite satisfied. Some lesser literary ventures which will work themselves out in the interval, without interrupting my chief occupation, will serve at least to keep up my acquaintanceship with my *clientele*.

And then follows a paragraph which helps us to remember that the shadows of the war in the Crimea fell athwart the European residence of the Mitchells:

All the outside world is busy again with thought of Sebastapol. The Emperor even is said to be in a gloomy state of anxiety, and what with the coming winter and the heavy losses in the camps, the prospects of the Allies are less bright than they have been any time in the season. Still, however, Paris is wearing a gay look; theatres are full; all the public works are going forward with wonderful rapidity.

Only one other letter of this period remains. "We are getting on here in a very domestic way, going out very little, and I hard at work upon what proves very slow work—my history," he wrote to Mrs. Goddard (December 14th, 1854). "Where we shall go [upon returning to America] as yet is very uncertain. I dread to think of the perplexity of choos-

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ing, and the annoyance of a long search. Two things I am determined to have—land, and an easy way of getting to New York. We are picking up odds and ends of furniture, as we find them cheap, and shall bring over enough perhaps for a couple of rooms; also quite a budget of books. . . . If worst should come to worst, and we should be obliged to seek a quiet boarding place for next summer, do you think there could any arrangement be made with the Rudds? Don't speak of this to anyone. I hardly know, indeed, why I suggest it, all my plans being yet so unsettled. In view of work with the publisher, it may be necessary to swelter out some part of the summer with the New Yorkers. One thing is certain—I shall have any amount of *hard work* to do for these two years to come; and my idling (if I ever have it again) must come afterward."

May 1855 saw parents and child safe in America. The European journey had enlarged and enriched the minds of Mr. and Mrs. Mitchell; it had given them a new sense of comradeship, a common store of knowledge and of memories, and a spirit of cosmopolitanism which they handed on to their children. For Mr. Mitchell it was not entirely a time of ease. During the absence abroad he completed *The Fudge Papers* for *Knickerbocker*, and contributed regularly to *Harper's*. The studies in Venetian history, entered upon with eagerness at the outset, he had continued doggedly and persistently as the magnitude of the task became clear to him. Long before he left Paris he had come to a realization that he had made only a small beginning upon Venice; that he had years of work ahead of him before he could complete the story in any satisfactory way. Beyond all else, however, thoughts of a home were occupying his mind. In comparison with this vision of home all else was of little consequence to

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him. As Europe receded into the shadowy distance, and the shores of America once more came into view, he felt that now, indeed, through whatever difficulties and perplexities, there would come realization of that dream of home which had floated so often and so long before his fancy; that now, in truth, he was "drifting, like a sea-bound river—homeward."





## THE EDGEWOOD YEARS



## XI

### A HOME AT LAST

It was in June 18[55] that, weary of a somewhat long and vagabond homelessness, during which I had tossed some half a dozen times across the Atlantic—partly from health-seeking, in part out of pure vagrancy, and partly (*me taedet meminisse*) upon official errand—I determined to seek the quiet of a homestead.—*My Farm of Edgewood*, 3.

Immediately upon reaching America, Mrs. Mitchell went to her South Carolina home with the little daughter, and Mr. Mitchell turned eagerly to home hunting. He was determined that wife and child should rejoin him under a roof-tree of his own. "There were tender memories of old farm days in my mind; and these were kindled to a fresh exuberance and lustiness by the recent hospitalities of a green English home, with its banks of laurestina, its broad-leaved rhododendrons, and its careless wealth of primroses," wrote Mr. Mitchell in retrospect.<sup>1</sup> "Of course the decision was for the country; and I had no sooner scented the land, after the always dismal sail across the fog-banks of George's shoal, than I drew up an advertisement for the morning papers, running, so nearly as I can recall it, thus: 'Wanted—A farm, of not less than one hundred acres, and within three hours of the city. It must have a running stream, a southern or eastern slope, not less than twenty acres in wood, and a water view.'"

<sup>1</sup> *My Farm of Edgewood*, 3-4.

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Within a very few days he was busy investigating replies to this advertisement. The claims of Norwich and Fairfield, Connecticut, he had already considered with care. Washington Irving advised the North River region. Staten Island, Tarrytown, and White Plains were visited in turn. It was not, however, until he went to New Haven, Connecticut, whither college memories drew him, that he found a farm which attracted strongly.

"I reached here late last evening," he wrote Mrs. Mitchell from the Tontine Hotel, New Haven, May 31st, 1855, "and have spent the day in looking about among the neighboring farms. I entered my name on the books as 'Mr. Mitchell, New York'; but some lounge, it appears, recognized me, and I found myself heralded this morning in the paper as 'Donald Mitchell, the distinguished Ik Marvel, &c., &c.' Of course, I have had, therefore to see some people I didn't want to see; but, *per contra*, have gained a very friendly call from Mr. [Colin] Ingersoll, Member of Congress from this district, who is to call again to-morrow morning to drive me out place-hunting." He then told of several farms already visited. The following morning, immediately after his return to the Tontine, he added this note to the letter previously quoted: "I have just returned with Mr. I. and his wife from visiting a very fine farm of 200 acres overlooking all New Haven and its valley, with good old-fashioned house, tenant house, orcharding, etc., thirty to forty acres of woodland. Price asked, \$16,000. It is the best and cheapest for its goodness I have yet seen. It is distant two miles from New Haven, and New Haven is, you know, four hours from New York. I wish you could see it!"

On the afternoon of June 2d, in a note written to Mary Goddard from New York City after another day of investi-

gation, he said: "Opinion now inclines to a 200 acre farm near New Haven, two miles off, under West Rock, having a magnificent view, tolerable house, good tenant house, good land, thousands of fruit, and fine healthy air, with a stout hill to keep it warm."

The search was all but ended. In *My Farm of Edgewood* Mr. Mitchell has told at length of his amusing experiences in connection with his home-hunting. He has told also of the finding:

One after another the hopes I had built . . . failed me. June was bursting every day into fuller and more tempting leafiness. The stifling corridors of city hotels, the mouldy smell of country taverns, the dependence upon testy Jehus, who plundered and piloted me through all manner of out-of-the-way places, became fatiguing beyond measure.

And it was precisely at this stage of my inquiry, that I happened accidentally to be passing a day at the Tontine Inn. . . . The old drowsy quietude of the place which I had known in other days, still lingered upon the broad green. . . . The College still seemed dreaming out its classic beatitudes, and the staring rectangularity of its enclosures and buildings and paths appeared to me only a proper expression of its old geometric and educational traditions. . . .

A friend called upon me shortly after my arrival, and learning the errand upon which I had been scouring no inconsiderable tract of country, proposed to me to linger a day more, and take a drive about the suburbs. I willingly complied with his invitation. . . .

It seems but yesterday that I drove from among the tasteful houses of the town, which since my boy time had crept far out upon the margin of the plain. It seems to me that I can recall the note of an oriole, that sang gushingly from the limbs of an over-reaching elm as we passed. I know I remember the stately broad road we took, and its smooth, firm macadam. I have a fancy that I com-

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pared it in my own mind, and not unfavorably, with the metal of a road which I had driven over only two months before in the environs of Liverpool. I remember a somewhat stately country house that we passed, whose architecture dissolved any illusions I might have been under in regard to my whereabouts. I remember turning slightly, perhaps to the right, and threading the ways of a neat little manufacturing village—catching views of waterfalls, of tall chimneys, of open pasture grounds; and remember bridges, and other bridges, and how the village straggled on with its neat white palings, and whiter houses, with honeysuckles at the doors; and how we skirted a pond where the pads of lilies lay all idly afloat; and how a great hulk of rock loomed up suddenly near a thousand feet, with dwarfed cedars and oaks tufting its crevices—tufting its top, and how we drove almost beneath it, so that I seemed to be in Meyringen again, and to hear the dash of the foaming Reichenbach; and how we ascended again, drifting through another limb of the village, where the little churches stood; and how we sped on past neat white houses—rising gently—skirted by hedgerows of tangled cedars, and presently stopped before a grayish-white farmhouse, where the air was all aflow with the perfume of great purple spikes of lilacs. And thence, though we had risen so little I had scarce noticed a hill, we saw all the spires of the city we had left, two miles away as a bird flies, and they seemed to stand cushioned on a broad bower of leaves; and to the right of them, where they straggled and faded, there came to the eye a white burst of water which was an arm of the sea; beyond the harbor and town was a purple hazy range of hills—in the foreground a little declivity, and then a wide plateau of level land, green and lusty, with all the wealth of June sunshine. I had excuse to be fastidious in the matter of landscape, for within three months I had driven on Richmond hill, and had luxuriated in the valley scene from the *côte* of St. Cloud. But neither one nor the other forbade my open and outspoken admiration of the view before me.

I have a recollection of making my way through the hedging

## A HOME AT LAST

lilacs, and ringing with nervous haste at the door-bell; and as I turned, the view from the step seemed to me even wider and more enchanting than from the carriage. I have a fancy that a middle-aged man, with iron-gray whiskers, answered my summons in his shirt sleeves, and proposed joining me directly under some trees which stood a little way to the north. I recollect dimly a little country coquetry of his, about unwillingness to sell, or to name a price; and yet how he kindly pointed out to me the farmlands, which lay below upon the flat, and the valley where his cows were feeding just southward, and how the hills rolled up grandly westward, and were hemmed in to the north by a heavy belt of timber.

I think we are all hypocrites at a bargain. I suspect I threw out casual objections to the house, and the distance, and the roughness; and yet have an uneasy recollection of thanking my friend for having brought to my notice the most charming spot I had yet seen, and one which met my wish in nearly every particular.

It seems to me that the ride to town must have been very short, and my dinner a hasty one: I know I have a clear recollection of wandering over those hills, and that plateau of farm-land, afoot, that very afternoon. I remember tramping through the wood, and testing the turf. . . . I can recall distinctly the aspect of house, and hills, as they came into view on my second drive from the town; how a great stretch of forest, which lay in common, flanked the whole, so that the farm could be best and most intelligently described as—lying on the edge of the wood. And it seemed to me, that if it should be mine, it should wear the name of — Edge-wood.

It is the name it bears now. I will not detail the means by which the coyness of my iron-gray-haired friend was won over to a sale; it is enough to tell that within six weeks from the day on which I had first sighted the view, and brushed through the lilac hedge at the door, the place, from having been the home of another, had become a home of mine; and a new stock of *lares* was blooming in the *atrium*.



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In the disposition of the landscape, and in the breadth of the land, there was all, and more than, I had desired. There was an eastern slope where the orchard lay, which took the first burst of the morning, and the first warmth of spring; there was another valley slope southward from the door, which took the warmth of the morning, and which keeps the sun till night. There was a wood, in which now the little ones gather anemones in spring, and in autumn, heaping baskets of nuts. There was a strip of sea in sight, on which I can trace the white sails, as they come and go, without leaving my library chair; and each night I see the flame of a lighthouse kindled, and its reflection dimpled on the water. If the brook is out of sight, beyond the hills, it has its representative in the fountain that is gurgling and plashing at my door.

And it is in full sight of that sea where even now the smoky banner of a steamer trails along the sky, and in the hearing of the dash of that very fountain, and with the fragrance of those lilacs around me, that I close this initial chapter of my book, and lay down my pen.

In such strain could Mr. Mitchell write of Edgewood eight years after its purchase.<sup>1</sup> Nor did he ever live to feel that his first impressions were wrong, or to regret his choice. In that June of 1855, with the sure instinct of a homing bird, he found the quiet retreat which was to be his for more than fifty-three years. His days of wandering were at an end. Henceforward the story of his life is bound up with the story of the crops, and flowers, and birds, and trees, and books of Edgewood.

<sup>1</sup> In *My Farm of Edgewood*, 37-45.

## XII

### OUTDOOR WORK

I do not think I ever met with a man who loves fields and flowers and trees as I love them; who can watch as I do their development of bud, blossom, and leaf, and their glorious decay with all its encarmined and purple dyes.—D. G. M. in random note.

The greatest charm of a country life seems to me to spring from that familiarity with the land and its capabilities, which can come only from minute personal observation, or the successive development of one's own methods of culture.—*My Farm of Edgewood*, 74.

“I would not counsel any man to think of a home in the country, whose heart does not leap when he sees the first grass-tips lifting in the city court-yards, and the boughs of the Forsythia adrip with their golden censers.” These are Mr. Mitchell's own words of wisdom to such as may be contemplating country life. They are a clear expression of that passion for country things which formed the foundation of his character. Long ere this it must have become clear to every reader that by inheritance, temperament, training, Mr. Mitchell was destined for country life. It must have become clear that he was influenced in his decision by no whim, by no chance vagary. He had never forgotten the attractions of the Salem farming days. Since those days he had seen the rural beauties of Europe, had observed much of agricultural method, and had continued his readings in the literature of farming and landscape-gardening. He now wished to give agriculture a full and fair trial. “I may say,”

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he wrote, "that I felt a somewhat enthusiastic curiosity to know, and to determine by actual experiment, if farm lands were simply a cost and an annoyance to any one who would not wholly forswear books, enter the mud trenches valorously, and take the pig by the ears, with his own hands." <sup>1</sup>

A passage in *Out-of-Town Places*<sup>2</sup> illuminates another side of Mr. Mitchell's character. It is the one in which he advises those who are thoroughly in earnest about a country home to make it themselves. "Xenophon," he wrote, as he slipped easily into his trick of classic allusion, "Xenophon, who lived in a time when Greeks were Greeks, advised people in search of a country place to buy of a slatternly and careless farmer, since in that event they might be sure of making their labor and care work the largest results. Cato, on the other hand, who represented a more effeminate and scheming race, advised the purchase of a country home from a good farmer and judicious house-builder, so that the buyer might be sure of nice culture and equipments—possibly at a bargain. It illustrates, I think, rather finely, an essential difference between the two races and ages: the Greek, earnest to make his own brain tell, and the Latin, eager to make as much as he could out of the brains of other people." And Mr. Mitchell added: "I must say that I like the Greek view best."

In this Greek spirit Mr. Mitchell worked. He appreciated the value of sharp endeavor. "We find our highest pleasure in conquest of difficulties" is a sentiment voiced in one of his rural studies.<sup>3</sup> He loved to experience the joy that comes in seeing the thoughts of the brain take shape under the labor of the hands. At no time was he a lover of dead perfection. "One meets from time to time with a gen-

<sup>1</sup> *My Farm of Edgewood*, 8.

<sup>2</sup> *Out-of-Town Places*, 128.

<sup>3</sup> See pp. 122-123.

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tleman from the city, smitten with a sudden rural fancy, who is in eager search for a place 'made to his hand,' with the walks all laid down, the entrance-ways established, the dwarf trees regularly planted, the conservatory a-steam, and the crocheted turrets fretting the sky-line of the suburban villa," he wrote in *Out-of-Town Places*.<sup>1</sup> "He may take a pride in his cheap bargain; he may regale himself with the fruits, and enjoy the vistas of his arbor; but he has none of that exquisitely-wrought satisfaction which belongs to the man who has planted his own trees, who has laid down his own walks, and who has seen, year after year, successive features of beauty in shrub, or flower, or pathway, mature under his ministering hand, and lend their attractions to the cumulating charms of his home." It was of such exquisitely wrought satisfaction that he was in search when he purchased Edgewood and undertook to shape it to his purposes.

It should never be forgotten that the Master of Edgewood was not a mere book-farmer. Competent helpers, of course, he intended to have beside him; his was always to be the directing mind. He entered upon his work with definite notions, determined to work with his own hands, and likewise determined that the venture should be self-sustaining—even profitable. He believed that "agricultural successes which are the result of simple, lavish expenditure, without reference to agricultural returns, are but empty triumphs." He was endeavoring to work out a method of culture that would commend itself to the average farmer, a method that would make for the advancement of agriculture; and to this end, he believed that "no success in any method of culture is thoroughly sound and praiseworthy, except it be imitable, to the extent of his means, by the smallest farmer."<sup>2</sup> I

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 121-122.

<sup>2</sup> *My Farm of Edgewood*, 64-65.

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have been able to secure a letter written by Mr. Mitchell to Mr. James B. Olcott, who for a time was tenant-farmer at Edgewood. The letter, which bears date of February 29th, 1860, throws light upon Mr. Mitchell's methods and purposes:

I am not rich enough [he wrote] to make a plaything of the farm, but am really dependent upon its returns and some little which I do literary-wise. For this reason I want it pushed to its utmost capacity, and a man at the helm who will feel an interest, and extend its sales and productions. Of course, I want meantime to give an example of neatness, and order, and thrift, and taste . . . and I want the workers to live and to do well. . . . I want you to feel very much as if the whole establishment was under your charge (I mean including my own garden, etc., at the upper house), so that whenever you see something going wrong, you may right it. . . . You may find me a little "notional" (as the country people say) in matters of taste, and maybe petulant at times, but I think not generally unreasonable. If a bit of work does not please me, I sometimes do it over—not to mortify one who has done it before; but because an eye-sore is always grievous to me, and I try forthwith to cure it.

Upon settling at Edgewood it was Mr. Mitchell's first care to effect a readjustment, and to make the general features of the farm conform to the notions he had in mind. The "Taking Reins in Hand" chapter of *My Farm of Edgewood* summarizes this early work. Order and beauty were, of course, the first qualities which he wished to stamp upon his surroundings. To this end, he laid out the grounds immediately surrounding the homestead, arranged the pasture and the garden lands, and began the planting of trees and hedges. He and Mrs. Mitchell carried the small hemlock-trees from the heights behind Edgewood and with their own

## OUTDOOR WORK

hands planted the hedges which surround the garden and form the road boundary. The laying of stone walls and the building of gates and gateways occupied much of his attention. In his wall-laying he took particular pride. "The country wall-layers, ordinarily, are indisposed to attempt such work," he wrote, "either doubting their own capacity, or considering it an encroachment upon the province of the mason. The consequence has been, in my own experience, that of some half-dozen or more which stand here and there about the fields at Edgewood, every one has been laid up with my own hands; and I may aver, with some pride, that after eight or ten winters of frost, they still stand firmly and compact."<sup>1</sup> After the original wooden tenant-house had accidentally burned, Mr. Mitchell planned and built chiefly from materials on the farm the beautiful little cottage which, now remodelled, is the charming home of his daughter, Mrs. Susan Mitchell Hoppin. The construction of this cottage was one of Mr. Mitchell's first object-lessons in the use of Connecticut boulders for building purposes.

All of this labor of beautifying the outdoor aspects of Edgewood was done quietly and without haste. With "the current American theory that if a thing needs to be done, it should be done at once—with rail-road speed, no matter whether it regards politics, morals, religion, or agriculture," Mr. Mitchell had little sympathy. Indeed, he loved to work leisurely and lovingly. "I think," he wrote, "that those who entertain the most keen enjoyment of a country homestead, are they who regard it always in the light of an unfinished picture—to which, season by season, they add their little touches, or their broad, bold dashes of color; and yet with a vivid and exquisite foresight of the

<sup>1</sup> *Out-of-Town Places*, 93.



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future completed charm beaming through their disorderly masses of pigments, like the slow unfolding of a summer's day." <sup>1</sup> In the slow, sure workings of God's Providence he had enduring faith. His piquant article, "On Not Doing all at Once," gives clear insight into his methods.<sup>2</sup> "It is a mistake, therefore, I think," he says in conclusion, "to aim at the completion of a country home in a season, or in two, or some half a dozen. Its attractiveness lies, or should lie, in its prospective growth of charms." Those who wish to follow the steps by which Edgewood was developed into a homestead famous throughout the world for its quiet, coy, and natural beauties, should read *My Farm of Edgewood* and *Out-of-Town Places*. Mr. Mitchell himself, it may be said in passing, always set most store by what he called his Edgewood "farm books." "*My Farm of Edgewood*," he wrote in 1896, "is my best book, if there's any best to them!" A delightful supplement to these two farm books is a small volume, *Pictures of Edgewood*, published by Mr. Mitchell in 1869.<sup>3</sup> These pictures show what the proprietor by labor of hand and brain had accomplished at Edgewood in fourteen years. In general features Edgewood stands to-day very much as Mr. Mitchell planned it during the first dozen years.

"I think that I have not withheld from view the awkwardnesses and embarrassments which beset a country life in New England—nor overstated its possible attractions," he wrote in the closing chapter of *My Farm of Edgewood*. "I have sought at any rate to give a truthful picture, and to suffuse it all—so far as I might—with a country atmosphere, so that a man might read, as if the trees were shaking their

<sup>1</sup> *My Farm of Edgewood*, 346.

<sup>2</sup> *Out-of-Town Places*, 120-128.

<sup>3</sup> *Pictures of Edgewood* in a series of photographs by Rockwood, and illustrative text by the author of *My Farm of Edgewood*.



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leaves over his head—the corn rustling through all its ranks within hearing, and the flowers blooming at his elbow. Be this all as it may—when, upon this charming morning of later August, I catch sight, from my window, of the distant water—where, as at the first, white sails come and go; of the spires and belfries of the near city rising out of their bower of elms, of the farm lands freshened by late rains into unwonted greenness, of the coppices I have planted, shaking their silver leaves, and see the low fire of border flowers flaming round their skirts, and hear the water plashing at the door in its rocky pool, and the cheery voices of children, rejoicing in health and the country air, I do not for a moment regret the first sight of the old farm house.” Such words of satisfaction come only from those who have wrought with their own energies in the open air, and upon the face of nature.

## XIII

### CIVIL WAR DAYS

The children who sat for my pictures are grown; the boys that I watched at their game of taw, and who clapped their hands gleefully at a good shot, are buttoned into natty blue frocks, and wear little lace-bordered bands upon their shoulders, and over and over, as I read my morning paper, I am brought to a sudden pause, and a strange electric current thrills me, as I come upon their boy-names printed in the dead-roll of the war.—*Reveries of a Bachelor* (Preface of 1863), xiii.

Edgewood had scarcely begun to respond to Mr. Mitchell's quickening care when the shadow of the Civil War fell athwart the nation. Upon few did this shadow fall more darkly than upon the Mitchells. In their home met the best traditions of the North and the South; the very names, Connecticut and South Carolina, suggest the influences that combined at Edgewood. It was inevitable that the Connecticut Mitchells would support the Union; it was likewise inevitable that the South Carolina Pringles would follow the leading of their native State. In common with the people of both sections of the country, husband and wife had watched the gathering storm, and had dreaded the day of its breaking. They realized that, in their home at least, the progress of the conflict would mean for both a supreme testing of character.

During the late summer of 1860 Mr. and Mrs. Pringle, with their daughters Susan and Rebecca, were visitors at Edgewood. As the weeks passed they watched the political aspect grow more and more threatening, and when at last

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the visit ended it was with sorrow and fear that they turned their faces toward Charleston. They were, however, happily ignorant of what the future had in store. Of the magnitude of the threatened conflict, there were few at that time who had any adequate notion. When the Pringles left Edgewood they took with them the Mitchells' eldest child, the little daughter Hesse, whose birth had occurred in Paris a little more than six years previously. It was upon the suggestion of Mrs. Mitchell, over whom a premonitory fear of broken family ties seemed to rest, that the child accompanied her grandparents. "She will be a bond between us," remarked Mrs. Mitchell as farewells were spoken.

After the return of the Pringles to Charleston events moved rapidly until the outbreak of war in April 1861. The beginning of the struggle found Mr. Mitchell just past his thirty-ninth birthday, in a condition of uncertain health, with a home unpaid for, and with a family of five small children and another to be born within the year. His duty seemed clear. His brother Alfred, unmarried and zealous for the Northern cause, immediately hurried from the Sandwich Islands, where he was then residing, and accepted a commission as captain in the Thirteenth Connecticut Regiment, serving later on the staff of Gen. Henry W. Birge. The other brother, Louis, although physically disqualified for regular service, was nevertheless active in all ways that he could be. By the courtesy of Gov. Buckingham, of Connecticut, he took passage as ship companion on the vessel which transported the Thirteenth Regiment to New Orleans. He made himself a kind of historian of Connecticut regiments, and furnished much exact information to those who later compiled records. He always rejoiced in the fact that of the half-dozen young men whose habit it was to gather in his bachelor

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apartments in Norwich each Sunday evening, and to whom he laughingly referred as his "Sunday-school class," all went into the Union army, where they won fame and promotion, two of them, Messrs. Birge and Harland, achieving the rank of general. Alfred, Mary Goddard's "little Alf" of Elmgrove days, was also in the service, and was killed in battle in Virginia in 1863. Of Mrs. Mitchell's five brothers who entered the Confederate army, two were killed.

During the four years of war Mr. and Mrs. Mitchell bore their sorrows with quiet dignity. In the home entire silence was maintained with regard to the causes and the merits of the conflict. Fortunately the children were too young to comprehend, and in after years the mother often expressed gratitude that they were not old enough to have opinions. The position of Mrs. Mitchell was peculiarly trying. As a woman belonging to a prominent South Carolina family, she was regarded with ill-concealed suspicion by many of the overzealous patriot women of New Haven, and it was a grief of which few knew the depth that she was not permitted to take active part in the organizations for the relief of Union soldiers.

Once the war had begun, it was not possible for the little daughter to return from Charleston. There remained only the comfort of letters. Mrs. Mitchell and her mother maintained a regular correspondence—usually writing at least once a week—and their letters were always passed. Occasionally a censor would write on the envelope: "I take pleasure in forwarding this beautiful letter." Only too soon were Mrs. Mitchell's fears realized. Early in January 1862 a brief letter from Mrs. Pringle brought to Edgewood the news of little Hesse's death. It told them that after a short illness the seven-year-old daughter had died of spinal men-

ingitis, December 27th, 1861, and had been buried in St. Michael's Churchyard, Charleston. "I can't tell how *humbled* I am by this chastisement," wrote the stricken mother to her parents. "Write me as often as you can, for your letters comfort and nerve me more than all else; and this blow makes me tremble more than ever for what might happen next." The friends of the Mitchells knew the peculiar poignancy of the grief that had thus come upon the Edgewood home. "My dear Mitchell," wrote George William Curtis, from Boston, January 30th, 1862, "I know there is nothing to do but to reach out my hand to you and say, God bless you and yours! I do it with all my heart and soul. . . . Why should you and your wife, of all, be the victims of these bitter days? Some day, when it is right to do so, tell her how deeply I have felt for her; for I have a girl and boy, and I have a right to sympathize with you. God keep us all!"

During the whole of this trying period Mr. Mitchell attempted to forget his anxieties and sorrows in labor, and in communion with Nature. In his literary work he maintained the same silence with respect to the war as in his home. All the while, however, he was following with keenest interest the progress of the struggle in its minutest details, at times even mapping the significant campaigns. It is only through letters to his most intimate friends, and through a few scattered notes, that we are enabled to know the workings of his mind at this time. One who had given as much thought as had Mr. Mitchell to principles of government and of political economy was certain to have strong and well-founded opinions on such a civil struggle. It is of great interest to learn the point of view of a man who was a non-participant and an observer, of one who occupied a detached and isolated position. We should remember that, although

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he was a non-combatant, he was a thinking one, and a clear-thinking one. By native endowment and by education Mr. Mitchell was a hater of war and a lover of reason. He had watched with impatience the manner in which the war spirit had been inflamed by those more zealous than wise, and by those dishonestly zealous, both North and South. He saw a better way open, a way by which the antiquated system of slavery could be gradually eliminated. He could not forget the manner in which Great Britain had dealt with the evil. Always this side of Mr. Mitchell's nature was in evidence, and he would rejoice to have it emphasized, he would take pleasure in being remembered for it. "I want only take the risk of being condemned for an errant conservative, when I express my belief that there are a great many good objects in life which are accomplished better by gradual progression toward them than by sudden seizure," he once wrote.<sup>1</sup> During the days of which I am writing, however, men of the Donald G. Mitchell type were not in the ascendency. The war-fever was in the air. The American states were experiencing what David Mallet once called "the disgrace of human reason," a disgrace resulting from the fact that "mankind in all their controversies, whether about a notion or a thing, a predicament or a province, have made their last appeal to brute force and violence." Moreover, Mr. Mitchell knew the people of both sections of the country, and had at no time a fanatic hatred based upon ignorance. Many of his college-mates were men from the Far South. His long trips through the Southern States had brought him into contact with all phases of the life there, and his close intimacy with the people had enabled him to understand their points of view. It is from such men, rather than from

<sup>1</sup> *Out-of-Town Places*, 120-121.



those who are surrounded by the smoke and the dust of conflict, that we frequently obtain the clearest and least prejudiced judgments.

First of all it needs to be said that Mr. Mitchell recognized clearly and fully the great unwisdom of any attempt to disrupt the Union. "I do not agree with the South," he wrote in 1861, "because I regard their action, secession, if ever permissible or warrantable by the broadest view of reserved rights of states, yet uncalled for by the danger of their position; most unwise politically, as alienating their adherents at the North; and morally wrong, because certain to invite immense bloodshed without any commensurate gain to themselves in particular, or humanity in general." At the same time he resented what seemed to him an almost unreasoning bitterness at the North—a general classing of all Southern people as beyond the pale of civilization. A part of his attitude was the result, no doubt, of the unmerited suspicion which rested upon his home—a suspicion which he, in all likelihood, magnified, yet a suspicion which went far to make him uncomfortable and irritable. His letter to Nathaniel Hawthorne, of July 5th, 1862, can be read aright only by recalling the stress of circumstances under which it was written.<sup>1</sup> Long after the close of the war, Mr. Mitchell held to his custom of thinking as his conscience dictated on

<sup>1</sup> The letter, printed in Julian Hawthorne's *Nathaniel Hawthorne and his Wife*, 2.312, was occasioned by Mr. Mitchell's reading of Hawthorne's article, "Chiefly about War Matters," in the *Atlantic Monthly* of July 1862. "A man's opinions can take no catholic or philosophic range nowadays, but they call out some shrewish accusation of disloyalty," wrote Mr. Mitchell. "It is to me one of the most humiliating things about our present national status, that no talk can be tolerated which is not narrowed to the humor of our tyrannic majority. I can recognize the enormity of basing a new nationality, in our day, upon slavery; but why should this blind me to all other enormities?" Mr. Mitchell always felt that the unauthorized publication of this letter without a statement of the circumstances surrounding it, was unfair.



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matters growing out of the struggle. "I have most of all chafed under the presumption that has infected everybody hereabout in our Northern world," he wrote to his friend Huntington (August 6th, 1866 or '67), "whereby every soul that made utterance south of the Potomac was consigned straight to hell, and every one north of the same line who voted the Republican ticket was consigned to heaven. I have had the effrontery to believe that Satan would thrust his spear (with a barb) into a good many that voted the R[epublican] ticket, as well as into a great many who voted the D[emocratic] ticket. Such belief has not been permissible in good society."

In 1864 Mr. Mitchell wrote an estimate of Washington Irving<sup>1</sup> in which he gave what I consider a good analysis of his own character and motives. There can be little question that he had himself in mind when he composed the following paragraphs:

He is a man who clearly shuns controversy, who does not like to take blows or to give blows, and whose intellectual life and development find shape and color from this dread of the combative. Not that he is without a quiet power and exercise of satire—not that follies which strike his attention do not get a thrust from his fine rapier; but they are such follies, for the most part, as everybody condemns. By reason of this quality in him, he avoids strongly controverted points in history; or, if his course lies over them, he gives a fairly adjusted average of opinion; he is not in mood for trenchant assertions of this or that belief. This same quality, again, makes him shun political life. He has a horror of its wordy wars, its flood of objurgation. Not that he is without opinions, calmly formed, and firmly held; but the entertainment of kindred belief he does not make the measure of his friendships. His

<sup>1</sup> "Washington Irving," *Atlantic Monthly*, June 1864.

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character counted on the side of all charity, of forbearance, against harsh judgments; it was largely and Christianly catholic, as well in things political as literary. He never made haste to condemn.

There is a rashness in criminating this retirement from everyday political conflicts which is, to say the least, very short-sighted. Extreme radicalism spurns the comparative inactivity, and says, "Lo, a sluggard!" Extreme conservatism spurns it, and says, "Lo, a coward!" It is only too true that cowards and sluggards both may take shelter under a shield of indifference; but it is equally true that any reasonably acute mind, if only charitably disposed, can readily distinguish between an inactivity which springs from craven or sluggish propensity, and that other which belongs to constitutional temperament, and which, while passing calm and dispassionate judgment upon excesses of opinion of either party, contributes insensibly to moderate the violence of both.

But whatever may have been Mr. Irving's reluctance to ally himself intimately with political affairs, and to assume advocacy of special measures, it is certain that he never failed in open-hearted, outspoken utterance for the cause of virtue, of human liberty, and of his country.

I have before me a few of the letters which passed between Mr. Mitchell and W. H. Huntington during the years of the war, and shall give a portion of one of Mr. Mitchell's written on the 6th of April 1862, about three months after news of the little daughter's death had reached Edgewood. The paralysis of spirit occasioned by this chastening is clearly evident in the first paragraphs, and it should be borne in mind that such spiritual gloom was a part of the Edgewood atmosphere from '61 to '65. Huntington had remarked upon the meagreness of his friend's literary output since 1855, and in reply Mr. Mitchell wrote:

True enough, as you surmise, I am not very full of literary execution; indeed, however full I had been, it is probable that the

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excitement of the war would have stayed it. But I will not palm any such lame excuse upon you. You know well enough my old country passion, and how green grass, and trees, and the studies I make of them, fill my heart full. You know, too, how nearly this life I lead here, comes to the old ideal I had long fed upon. You know very well with how little heartiness I ever entered into the publicities of city life. All this again I name not in way of valid excuse for inaction, but simply as cause.

If by any exigency I had been pushed into the keen *melée* of towns and kept there, I should have spent the energy and constructiveness which I have here spent on shrubberies and walks, on books and imaginative catastrophes. So, it has not befallen. I lament for the sake of friends who express disappointment and indignation, far more than on my own score. I might have kindled a great deal of abuse which would have made me sore, and some praise which would have hardly made me better. The quick love I had once for reputation is, I am ashamed to say, almost infinitesimal. One reason of my under-valuation of it is, I think, the absurd over-praise which was once given me. I really believe I could do much better things than I have done, not perhaps so buoyant with young, fresh sentiment, which like the sight of Rome comes to no man twice; but things of sharper edge, and keener insight, and wider truth. For my children's sake and for the possible good they might work, I sometimes yearn to do them—far more than for any lift of reputation.

And then follows a confidential utterance of opinion in regard to the war. It is worth while to emphasize the date of the letter, April 6th, 1862:

As for the war, I may talk freely with you since we stand on nearly even ground—you having effectively expatriated yourself, and I, virtually done the same, by my retirement, and my abnegation of all politics, even to voting. The most aggravating aspect of the war to me personally is the split it goes to make in the family

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allegiance of my children. I can't tolerate the thought of their cursing one set of ancestors, and swearing by the other. I shall try and teach them early that southern people are not all negro-stealers, and the Yankees not all penny-wise meddlers in other men's matters. You may laugh at my fears on such score, but if you had read our daily local papers for two years past, and those of the South in the same time, and known how far current talk has taken on the same devilish coloring, you would understand it.

As for the political economy of the matter, and every government question is one of political economy, my opinion is of course with yours against Southern action, and against the madness of basing any scheme of government in this age upon an exploded system. . . . Slavery is an immense, long-bolstered evil of civilization, and we must *ease* it down into the limbo of past things.

As for the war, I see no near end. Gen. Tyler thinks it lies in June, at furthest. I wish I thought so. I believe there are a million able-bodied men (a small minimum) who had rather die than yield; and I can see no present prospect of shooting them off by June. As for "Unionism," I fear it has bated hour by hour, since the war began.

Independently of the declared basis of *slavery* for the Confederate states, I think the sympathies of the larger part of the civilized world, would rally to the Southern cause. We Northerners can, of course, not easily forget, or forego, our pride in the great "Union"; but outsiders feel nothing of this. They see only that five or six millions of people, for alleged wrongs (or fears of wrong) wish to dissolve their old national partnership, and govern themselves. If the slave question were out of the way as I said, this action, whether *brusque*, or in disorderly, or mad, would, if persisted in, rally the sympathies of those who believe in democracy. Supposing a "people" decide by ballot to assert, and work out their independence, and secure a government after their own formulas, how small must the "people" be to make their action indefensible (not in view of con-

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stitutions or compacts but) in view of their "inalienable right"? Are not a few millions of souls enough?

I must confess that I am not the unmitigated admirer of our "nationality" that some men are. I do not believe that we Americans have crowned civilization, and wrought out the *ne plus ultra* of humanity. I believe only, that we have made a bold and grand experiment, which has given larger faith in men's capacity to rule themselves, than ever existed before; but only this. And as this revolution strikes us, we stand poised on the perilous edge of our success. If all our rulers (voters) loved liberty heartily, and hated tyranny firmly, and abided by rules of honesty, I should feel sure of a grand result; but I fear greatly that the "character" of the nation (or of the bulk of the men who compose it) is below the level of that honorable intent, and perfect disinterestedness which would deal firmly and generously with the troubles upon us. I hope I am [a] false prophet.

My fear is that success will inaugurate a military dynasty that shall ignore all the privileges of our past times; and that want of success will drive us into cowardly bargain by which we may reap money-rewards out of slave labor, again. In either event I should lose my pride in America as the country of free institutions, and promise for humanity.

To this letter Huntington in part replied from Paris, August 18th, 1862:

Your letter of 6th April has been lying in sight ever since its receipt . . . and few of my transatlantic friends are oftener in mind than you, especially since the commencement of the war, which touches you more nearly than many of them. So far from being capable of laughing at the anxiety you express as to the "split it goes to make in the family allegiance of your children," I sympathize with you most sincerely in that natural solicitude. But I often think that families like yours will help to restore a human social union hereafter between the South and North, so divided now,

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whether their political separation be permanent or not. They will help to confirm the peace which it has long seemed to me it may be the work of diplomatists to negotiate between C. S. A. and U. S. A.  $x$  years hence.

Huntington spoke truly when he said that families such as the Mitchells and Pringles would help to restore "a human social union" between the two sections of the country. Out of the furnace of affliction they came with the marks of suffering upon them, marks which in the case of the parents remained until the end of life; yet they emerged with chastened and enlarged spirits, which sought to bind up the wounds of fratricidal strife. Mr. Mitchell never again visited the South. He said that he had no desire to see the ravages which war had wrought on the once prosperous and beautiful country. Twice Mrs. Mitchell visited her parents, and did what she could to solace them in their grief and desolation. Twice Mr. and Mrs. Pringle came North, and sat once more in the shade of the Edgewood trees. For them all, war had done its worst in the way of destruction of property and physical death; it had not destroyed the foundations of human affection—those invisible foundations upon which rest the abiding things of the spirit.



## XIV

### LITERATURE AND ART

Reformers and teachers are learning that their labors to tell upon the minds of men must be directed by that delicate tact which, in respect of logic, is but another name for taste. One book or one treatise which steals its way into the mind by delicate approaches, will stick longer by a man's purpose, and give more color to his thought, than hundreds whose lean, dry, barren periods touch him with as little warmth as belongs to the fingers of the dead.

Throughout the vegetable world, with only rare exceptions, growth is assured and sealed with bloom. So in matters social and moral, progress is not ended, nor all that we bring under that convenient term civilization, fully compacted and perfected, until set off with the coronal bloom of art.—D. G. M. in unpublished lectures.

Of the outdoor work which occupied Mr. Mitchell until the feebleness of old age rendered it impracticable, the reader has already been told. Such work, however, was but a portion of the full and rich life that was lived at Edgewood. In a way that certainly has had few parallels Mr. Mitchell's days were filled with labors of body and mind; hand and brain were always active. He lived a wholesome life. Nathaniel Hawthorne once called Mr. Mitchell's attention to the sane balance of the Edgewood routine.<sup>1</sup> "Your praise of *Our Old Home*," wrote Mr. Hawthorne, "though I know

<sup>1</sup> In the concluding portion of a letter dated January 16th, 1864, of which the first part is published in *American Lands and Letters*, 2.161.



that I ought to set down a great part of it as a friendly exaggeration, gives me inexpressible pleasure; because I have fallen into a quagmire of disgust and despondency with respect to literary matters. I am tired of my own thoughts and fancies, and my own mode of expressing them—a misfortune which I am sure will never befall you, partly because you will never deserve it, and partly because you keep yourself healthful by grappling with the wholesome earth so strenuously.” It remains now to tell of the fruitful literary activities which centred in the Edgewood home, and of the æsthetic studies which set off all with “the coronal bloom of art.”

The library which Mr. Mitchell had been gathering through many years was collected for use, and when he entered upon the management of his farm he had no thought of “forswearing books.” Rather, he intended that the freshness of the outdoors should brighten the library, and that the inspiration of books should in turn enliven the labors of the field. “The books practical and poetical which relate to flower and field, stand wedded on my shelves and wedded in my thought,” he has told us.<sup>1</sup> “In the text of Xenophon I see the ridges piling along the Elian fields, and in the music of Theocritus I hear a lark that hangs hovering over the straight-laid furrows. An elegy of Tibullus peoples with lovers a farmstead that Columella describes. The sparrows of Guarini twitter up and down along the steps of Crescenzi’s terraced gardens. Hugh Platt dibbles a wheat-lot, and Spenser spangles it with dew. Tull drives his horse-hoe afield where Thomson wakes a chorus of voices, and flings the dappling shadows of clouds. Why divorce these twin-workers toward the profits and the entertainment of a rural

<sup>1</sup> *Wet Days at Edgewood*, 12-13.

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life? Nature has solemnized the marriage of the beautiful with the practical by touching some day, sooner or later, every lifting harvest with a bridal sheen of blossoms; no clover-crop is perfect without its bloom, and no pasture hill-side altogether what Providence intended it should be until the May sun has come and stamped it over with its fiery brand of dandelions."

During the five or six years immediately following 1855 Mr. Mitchell's literary output was not large. Most of his energy was consumed in the creation of Edgewood, in the development of its peculiarly individual atmosphere and charm. Within that time he had, to be sure, written and delivered many lectures, and contributed several papers to *Harper's Magazine*. Such literary work, however, was but casual and preliminary to the really large amount that followed. It was only after the beginning of the Civil War that, stirred partly by the necessity of enlarging his income, partly by the desire to relieve the anxiety occasioned by the conflict, he applied himself vigorously to composition. It was during the war period and immediately following, that he wrought out his rural studies, first as magazine articles, later as books. *My Farm of Edgewood* grew out of an article on "Agriculture as a Profession; or, Hints About Farming," which appeared in the *New Englander* of November 1860. The delightful series of papers which ran in the *Atlantic Monthly* from April 1863 until September 1864 under the title "Wet Weather Work"—a title indicative of the fact that no days at Edgewood were idle days—came to publication in book form as *Wet Days at Edgewood* in 1865. *Seven Stories* (1864), a volume of short narratives, half fiction, half truth, grew out of his musings over the five little note-books of European travel. *Out-of-Town Places*, first issued as *Rural Studies* in 1867, con-

sists of a gathering together of papers contributed to *The Horticulturist*, and *Hours at Home*, from 1865 to 1867.

Toward the close of the war Mr. Mitchell turned to the fulfilment of a long-cherished design—the production of a longer and more serious work of fiction than he had yet written. He had conceived the notion at least as early as 1852. Sketchings of the plot occur in his early note-books, together with two prospective titles, the one, *The New England Vicar*, for “a story resembling the *Vicar of Wakefield*”; the other, *A Passage in the Life of Doctor Johns, Orthodox Minister of Ashfield, in Connecticut*. It is perhaps unfortunate that *Dr. Johns* was written for serial publication in the *Atlantic Monthly*. Such method led to occasional procrastination in plotting and composition, and Mr. Mitchell always did best when he wrote continuously and in a glow. Huntington, who watched the progress of the story with great interest, feared that it would not be successful, and deprecated work which in his opinion prevented the author from producing that for which he was best fitted. From New York City, on the 9th of January 1866, Huntington wrote:

When and how are you to wind up *Dr. Johns*? I liked the last number better than almost any other that I have read. It seems to me that you have, in a sort, cornered yourself; and short of a huddled, break-down denouement, you *must* close with higher, finer effects than your readers had, two months ago, any right to expect or ask from you. Still, I want to see you free of this story-telling and frankly given up to your true specialty—essaying, with disguised wisdom, on strictly practical themes.

At last, in the *Atlantic* of June 1866, Mr. Mitchell succeeded in bringing the narrative to an end, and set about at once to prepare it for publication in book form. “I send

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you," he wrote to Huntington, September 2d, 1866, "a *rare* print of preface to *Dr. Johns*—rare because Scribner objected as furnishing newspapers material for onslaught, and therefore it will not appear; hence, only two copies were struck." At least one of these rare copies has survived, and it is interesting to read it now when all the heat of discussion has subsided, and the fears of harm that the book might do have passed away. The proscribed preface ran thus:

The following book was first published in the *Atlantic Monthly*, and I was tempted to this manner of work by the urgency and liberality of my friend Mr. Fields, the successful and accomplished conductor of that magazine. The title, however, which I give upon the initial page, Mr. Fields condemned as too long. I return to it now as expressive of the humble pretensions of a book which neither in construction or in number or variety of characters shows the usual qualities of a novel.

Its semi-religious tone has called down upon my head certain private rebukes. There are very good people who have fancied that my aim was to throw ridicule upon the priestly office; there are others who have seriously questioned my orthodoxy; and still others who have objected a too kindly representation of the Romish faith.

Surely nothing could have been further from my mind than to throw ridicule upon the character of an honest Christian teacher, of whatever faith. As for orthodoxy, it is so hard to say precisely what it means nowadays, that I can make neither denial or averment—if the word bore its old Greek significance only, it appears to me that every man should be modest in declaring that he was sure of himself. While I do not adhere to the rituals or ceremonials of the Romish hierarchy, either by education, or by love, and while I abhor utterly the present leash of its august head with the despotic traditions of the past, I have yet a tender respect for a church which has counted so many Christian veterans in its ranks, which

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has given a serene faith to millions, and whose charities have flowed steadily into the lap of the poor from the beginning.

My chief object has been to illustrate the phases of New England village-life twenty to forty years ago. This I have tried to do faithfully, and have sought to bring the religious manifestations into higher relief by introducing a foreign element in the person of the French girl—Adèle. It is quite possible that my pictures may seem untrue to many who have had equal opportunities of observation; all I can say is, that if they had not seemed true to me, I should never have written them.

I know that this apologetic strain cannot be grateful to a serious reader, and that whatever I may say here on my card of introduction, I shall finally be judged by what is written further on. I see very much that should have been made better; very much that a finer and firmer hand would have dashed out altogether; but I see nothing palpably unfair or untrue. A writer who cannot give himself this much of praise should never write at all. It is a longer venture than any with which I have yet taxed the public—a public that has heretofore shown me so kind a welcome that, from mere habit, I am inclined to count upon its kindness now; most of all, I have tried to teach charity in the book; and I close this little note of introduction asking for charity.

To-morrow to fresh woods and pastures new!

EDGEWOOD FARM, July 1866.

In a letter to Huntington, January 2d, 1867, the author detailed the fate of the book upon publication, and his own reflections now that the work was completed:

The non-success of *Dr. Johns* has confirmed your opinion; yet it is not altogether non-success. High price was against it, and Charles Reade's *Griffith Gaunt* (just then out) was against it, this latter selling at seventy-five cents, and *Dr. Johns* at \$3.25. Judge which sold! Yet, say all you will against it, no book I have written

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since the *Reveries* has called out so many return letters of thanks and sympathy from private quarters. I am not at all satisfied with it, but I think there is good intent in it. The orthodox papers have all opened their blasts upon it, and *Boston Recorder* says it is as safe on a parlor table as a bomb-shell would be! There's a compliment—not meant. Shall I anger you if I say I am casting about for the wherewithal to make a story that will be better? I don't like to leave the field beaten. I thoroughly believe that if I had written it (without periodic publication) at a heat, and by a third shorter—keeping glow alive, I should have made it a success. As it is, about 4,000 have been sold.

On the 6th of March 1894, beneath the first sketching of the plot in the note-book of 1852, Mr. Mitchell wrote that the carrying out of the plot was never satisfactory to him. "That book," he concludes, "was started on lines that should have made it a great deal better book than it is." In 1907 he referred to it as a "longish pastoral, half romance and half real"; and it is this portion of reality that gives the book much of its value. Whatever may be its faults of construction, these do not obscure the historical significance of the novel. The book is an almost unsparing "diagnosis of a dying Puritanism," and portrays the processes and results of an unyielding but mistaken religious educational régime. Those who wish to know the atmosphere of the Connecticut villages of Mr. Mitchell's boyhood, the perfervid religious zeal of such ministers as the Rev. Alfred Mitchell and his contemporaries, and the "preposterous shapes" which the religious instruction of the times took in young minds, should read *Dr. Johns*. It is contemporary evidence of the first quality, and its value as a side-light on New England life and customs will become clearer with the passing years.

Early in the war period Mr. Mitchell began to give over



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thought of bringing to completion his study of Venetian history, and within a few years he abandoned systematic work upon it. As early as 1850 he had prepared a lecture on Venice, which in amplified form he repeated for a good many years. The subject never ceased to have attraction for him, but he came to realize that one lifetime is insufficient for the completion of all one's literary projects. A paragraph from a letter to Huntington, April 6th, 1862, shows how the matter was shaping itself in his mind:

As for the history, the *magnum opus*, it bides because of its largeness. You know I always liked symmetry and completeness, even in figures of speech; and the *completeness* of so many centuries of history has taken a nightmare shape of *hugeness*. The more I have read and thought upon it, the more I seem only half through the alphabet of the matter. Ten years in Italy, five in France, seem essential to measure the fullness of it. I wish my name had never been connected with a history of Venice. In that event I might bring out a rapid, graphic *esquisse* of the salient periods of the Venetian history, which I think would carry the color, and show the drift of that weird national tide which ebbed and flowed about the sunken city.

During the sixties Mr. Mitchell's writings on agricultural and rural subjects attracted such wide-spread and favorable notice that when Messrs. Pettengill and Bates founded what it was their purpose to make the best farm-journal in America, he was asked to assume the editorship. The choice was heartily approved throughout the country. "I have read all thy writings as they appeared," wrote John G. Whittier to the new editor, November 11th, 1868, "and always with interest and sympathy. I know of no one who is more worthy of the honorable and responsible position of editor of



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a rural and family paper of a high order, than thyself." The confidence of the public was not misplaced. Mr. Mitchell immediately stamped his personality upon the new enterprise. His was the choice of name, *Hearth and Home*, his was the design for the heading—the ivy-covered entrance to the English farm cottage<sup>1</sup> at Edgewood, with Mrs. Mitchell and two of the children sitting on the steps; his was the choice of quotation from Shakespeare, as motto for the magazine—

All superfluous branches  
We lop away, that bearing boughs may live.

From the first issue, dated December 26th, 1868, until that of September 24th, 1870, when the magazine passed into other hands, Mr. Mitchell was the life of *Hearth and Home*. He secured for it contributions from the leading literary and scientific men of the time, kept the illustrated portion up to the highest standard, and put his best effort into his own editorial writing. A portion of his initial editorial reveals the manner in which he approached his task, and the temper which marked the magazine while under his direction:

[W]hile we shall take all needful measures to give to the farmer whatever scientific or practical information he may require, we shall also seek, by the medium of this journal, to extend a refining influence over his home and fireside, and to make him a better and larger and cheerier man, while we make him a better and wiser farmer. To this end we shall hope to kindle and increase his love for flowers and fruits, for neatness and order, for good reading, and for all the comforts of home. . . . We shall teach unflinchingly that lack of neatness and order about a country home can never be compensated for by any isolated beauty of tree or garden,

<sup>1</sup> This picture of the cottage entrance appears on the title-pages of the volumes forming the Edgewood edition of Mr. Mitchell's works.

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and furthermore shall preach and teach that no essential beauty of a farmer's or a laborer's home is at war with the economies of his daily life. . . . [W]e shall also urge upon him an exercise of that broader zeal for improvement which will look to the interests and growth of his neighborhood. We have no faith in the breadth of that man's rural taste who is satisfied when all is to his liking within the compass of his own circuit of wall. He owes other duty to his roadside, and to his neighbors, and to the village or town where he is resident. He should rally to the support of every desirable public improvement which is set on foot, and endeavor to promote that combined effort without which no public improvements are possible. . . . [W]e shall plead for the establishment of public parks, counting them a most wise and healthy adjunct to every considerable city, where the work-woman may take her babes, and where youth of every degree may learn to love the beauty of tree and lake and lawn, and bless God for the opportunity to enjoy. . . . Finally, and by way of summing up of this, our salutation, we hope to win over our sluggish farm friends everywhere to a wiser economy, to a larger thrift, to a better practice, and to show them the way of it. We hope to win country friends, of whatever pursuit, to a larger and livelier love of hearth and home, and to incite them to efforts to make their hearths cheerful and their homes beautiful, believing that in so doing, we shall promote that calmness of mind and cheerfulness of temper and charity of purpose which will make them better citizens.

Never once during his editorship did Mr. Mitchell allow the magazine to deviate from the high ideal which he had thus set up for it. It is a delight to-day to read the first ninety-two numbers—the Mitchell numbers—of *Hearth and Home*. They combine that practical spirit and that literary quality which only such a man as Donald G. Mitchell could bring together in the pages of a farm magazine. The standard of such magazines was greatly elevated by the example

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of *Hearth and Home*. Unfortunately, the founders had projected the enterprise on too large a scale. Mr. Mitchell, as editor-in-chief, had no connection with the business management of the magazine. He withdrew in September 1870 when the proprietors found it necessary to dispose of their interests to Orange Judd & Co., and Mr. David M. Judd assumed editorial supervision. There was general regret when the change of editorship became known. In chronicling the change one newspaper<sup>1</sup> declared: "But as for us—and thousands of others, we believe—we shall always miss in that journal the exquisite touch of the man Ik Marvel, who presided at its birth, gave it its name, and largely aided in pushing it to popularity with a rapidity almost unprecedented in the history of American journalism."

After his withdrawal from the staff of *Hearth and Home*, Mr. Mitchell's literary work was confined chiefly to magazine writing and to lecturing. The part which came to completest fulfilment was that which appeared under the general title *English Lands, Letters, and Kings*, with the two kindred volumes, *American Lands and Letters*. These volumes were the outgrowth of lectures which he began preparing as early as 1881. He was encouraged in their preparation by Mary Goddard's daughter, Mrs. Julia C. G. Piatt, mistress of a school for girls in Utica, New York. In a letter to Mrs. Piatt of March 23d, 1881, he wrote: "I have prepared six . . . lectures of forty-five minutes length on topics suggested by our conversation. They are nominally on English literature and history; but they take in topography also, and are intended to make young people eager about English waysides, whether they travel *in fact*, or only travel in his-

<sup>1</sup> I have been unable to identify the paper from which this clipping was made. The clipping is dated 1871.

tory, and through English poems. They are not of a sort to satisfy a critic, or a professor of history; but they have been very well received. . . . The six lectures named only come down from early Saxon times to the days of Elizabeth—of course dealing with some authors not very familiarly known; but with none, I think, about whom there is no need to know.”

For a good many years he continued to extend the scope of these lectures, which he read before many audiences within easy travelling distance of Edgewood. In the autumn of 1884 he lectured for one term on English literature before the young men of Yale College. The young women of Wells College likewise had the pleasure of listening to a series of similar lectures. It was at Wells that Mr. Mitchell made the acquaintance of Miss Frances Folsom, an acquaintance which he commemorated in 1895 by dedicating to her—who meantime, as the wife of Grover Cleveland, had become Mistress of the White House—the third volume of *English Lands, Letters, and Kings*.

I find a note in which Mr. Mitchell speaks of the manner in which he prepared his lectures. “I read, and re-read, and consider, and observe,” he remarks, “trying to saturate my mind with all the leading facts of the time. I try very hard by reading and note-taking—not merely history, but fiction, poetry, paintings (if there are any)—to translate myself to the atmosphere of the [period]; and with that mood upon me, go at my task. I do not feel bound in doing this to give one great name just so many pages, and such another so many more; not at all. I take them as they come bubbling to the surface of that flood of memories of those times I have tried to set on the flow; and describe so many and such as will best give satisfaction, and vivid sense of the current and of the

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characters." He was always very modest in speaking of his books on English and American literature, feeling, as he usually felt in regard to all his books, that they should have been a great deal better than they are. In preparing these volumes on literature it needs to be said that Mr. Mitchell knew exactly what he was attempting to do, and with Dr. Samuel Johnson might have said he "knew very well how to do it." He was not attempting to push forward the limits of knowledge, nor was he "grubbing in the rubbish heaps of antiquity" for chance bits of overlooked fact. He himself found the vast field of English literature a "realm of gold," and in wandering there obtained refreshment for his soul. It was to share with others this refreshment, it was to lure others—and especially young people—into the enchanted land, that he wrote. "Remember," he exclaims in the second volume of *English Lands, Letters, and Kings*, "and let me say it once for all—that my aim is not so much to give definite instruction as to put the reader into such ways and starts of thought as shall make him eager to instruct himself." It was immensely gratifying to Mr. Mitchell to have generous evidence of the fact that these volumes, and the lectures from which they grew, did just what he wished them to do. A whole generation of young Americans followed him into the goodly kingdom of literature along these paths of his making; and thousands of his own generation followed the trails with keenest pleasure, seeing through the magic light which the author shed upon them "the green of the lands, the gold of the letters, and the purple of the kings."<sup>1</sup>

No other discourses on English and American letters fill just the place of these books. The author had learned ex-

<sup>1</sup> I have quoted from a letter in which his Yale classmate, Prof. Joseph Emerson, of Beloit College, thanked Mr. Mitchell for a copy of *English Lands*.

actly what he could best do, and he attempted nothing else. "He does not aim to be recondite and full," wrote one reviewer.<sup>1</sup> "But for a gathering together of raw material and putting it into the furnace of an active, transfusing mind, casting out the dross, and bringing out the nuggets of pure gold, we have nothing like it in our literature." Another<sup>2</sup> commented upon "the author's gift for distilling the very quintessence of biography." When, in addition to these gifts, we recognize that further and greater one by virtue of which everything is seen under a magic light

Gilding pale streams with heavenly alchemy,

we shall understand in some degree the wide circulation, the secret of the charm, and the inspiring quality of this series of books with which Mr. Mitchell formally closed his almost sixty years of authorship.<sup>3</sup>

It was a magnificent tale of work in the realm of letters that he had thus accomplished, a work with which many men, though they had done nothing else, would have been satisfied. It should again be emphasized, however, that his writings represent only a portion of Mr. Mitchell's achievement. All the while he had been pushing forward his studies in the æsthetics of rural life. After the purchase of Edgewood he grew very naturally into landscape-gardening, an art which he cultivated for many years. For a time (1867-1868), he formed a partnership in landscape-gardening and rural architecture with Mr. William H. Grant, former superintending engineer of Central Park, New York City. Upon assuming the editorship of *Hearth and Home* Mr. Mitchell severed his

<sup>1</sup> In the *Baltimore Sun*, October 1897.

<sup>2</sup> In the *Nation*, December 1897.

<sup>3</sup> With the second volume of *American Lands and Letters*, in 1899.



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connection with Mr. Grant, and as time and opportunity permitted, carried on the work alone. He was never a noisy advertiser. "I am sure of my capacity to lay out grounds *well*," he wrote Huntington, January 2d, 1867, "but I haven't the faculty of noisy reclamation which in these days goes before success." Notwithstanding his quiet method of procedure, his services were frequently sought. Among colleges, Princeton and Lafayette secured his advice on the laying out and planting of grounds. The city of Allegheny, Pennsylvania, adopted with few changes Mr. Mitchell's designs for parks. In 1876 he furnished the design for the Connecticut Building at the Centennial Exposition, Philadelphia, a State building generally accounted one of the best at the exposition. In 1882 he made an elaborate report to the commissioners of the city of New Haven on the layout of East Rock Park, of which most of the provisions were adopted. He gave much thought to a complete park system for New Haven, and drew detailed plans which, chiefly because of the expense involved, were not adopted. In addition to this public work, he gave a touch of beauty to many private estates. His appointment as an additional commissioner of the United States to the Paris Universal Exposition in 1878 came as a recognition of the work he had accomplished in these fields. In 1867 his name was presented as that of the best possible man in the United States for the commissionership of agriculture; but the fact that the commissioner of education was chosen that year from Connecticut seemingly made Mr. Mitchell's appointment impossible.

Meantime he had been devoting himself to a study of painters and painting, and indulging his love of color by making water-color drawings for his own amusement. His

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European travel, in particular his residence in Italy, had stimulated all his artistic sensibilities. He never had special instruction in art—he was entirely self-taught; but he did have confidence in his knowledge of the principles which underlie the art of the painter, and felt that he knew how to evaluate good painting. His artistic sense was fitly recognized in New Haven by his appointment at the founding of the Yale Art School in 1865 as one of the four members of the advisory council. He frequently lectured before the school, one of his lectures, "Titian and his Times," appearing in *Bound Together*.<sup>1</sup>

I cannot forbear quoting the apt words<sup>2</sup> of Mr. Arthur Reed Kimball. "Indeed," wrote Mr. Kimball, "it would be hard for even a casual reader to imagine Mr. Mitchell as other than an artist, whatever his form of expression. It is its artistic feeling which gives character to his work in literature. His distinguishing note is grace, charm, felicity of phrase. It is his artistic quality, the perfection with which the lightest thought is caught and held, and the slightest turn made, that has appealed to readers of to-day as it appealed at the first."

Nor should we lose sight of the fact that all these activities were spontaneous outgrowths of the man's character. He loved literature, he loved nature, he loved to impose his mind upon broad sweeps of landscape, he loved art in its every phase; and always behind the art he sought to understand the personality of the artist. Loving these things as he did, he desired that others should love them also. Yet he never attempted to commend the things he loved by obtrusive methods; his approach was always coy—a shy steal-

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 19-60.

<sup>2</sup> See "The Master of Edgewood," *Scribner's Magazine*, February 1900.

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ing into the good graces of the public. The style in which he presented whatever subject he had in hand was in many instances the lure which attracted. People found themselves submitting to his quiet charm. And when once they had paused to listen, they usually remained to become disciples.

In conclusion I need only say that in 1910 Mr. Mitchell's friends and neighbors—those who knew his work and the tenor of his life—took steps to perpetuate his memory most fittingly by organizing the Donald G. Mitchell Memorial Library. The thought of such memorial would have been a source of happiness to him. Year after year this library will grow in size and influence; year after year it will be a never-failing spring from which will flow living waters. And so long as its treasured wealth and its outward form inspire and uplift men, it will remain a worthy memorial of Mr. Mitchell's achievements in literature and in art.

## XV

### THE GOSPEL OF BEAUTY

And while we are astonishing the world with our power, our wealth, our bigness, is it not worth while to adorn them all with somewhat of that elegance which refines the man—somewhat in our schools, in our arts, in our landscape, in our letters, in our homes, in ourselves, which shall stand in evidence that money and power were not all to us, but only weapons with which to conquer some higher place?—D. G. M. in unpublished lecture.

I have elsewhere called attention to the fact that in Mr. Mitchell the culture and refinement of a long line of ancestry flowered. A wide diversity of gifts was his by inheritance, and by virtue of this inheritance and his own application he gained distinction in business, in æsthetics, in literature. I wish now to emphasize the further fact that his achievements were not fragmentary and scattered, but rather related portions of a consistent whole. Careful study of his life reveals clearly a definite unity through all the diversity, and enables us to see that in whatever work he engaged, he was guided by a sense of taste which sprang from some deep-rooted perception of beauty.

Of the different theories underlying the philosophy of beauty, Mr. Mitchell had a good knowledge. Of mere theory, however, he was, I am convinced, always rather impatient. There may have been times when with Plato he could ask for a description or definition of beauty in general; yet for the most part he turned from abstract discussions to things beautiful in themselves. He most certainly believed

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that mere definitions, or what sometimes pass for such, rarely help in the actual recognition of beauty in particular. From all such definitions he turned with a sense of relief to the contemplation of color, landscape, poem, picture, and character, and saw in each the beauty which his soul recognized. With respect to the beauty of any particular thing, he would doubtless have used the words of the old sailor who, when asked how he told a good sailing-vessel, replied: "By a blow of the eye, sir." It is enough to say that, as in the case of John Milton, there had been instilled into him "a vehement love of the beautiful," and that it was his habit "day and night to seek for this idea of the beautiful, as for a certain image of supreme beauty, through all the forms and faces of things, and to follow it," as it led him on by "some sure traces" which he seemed to recognize. And it was characteristic of him that he wished to share all that his search revealed to him. Although he was in himself shy and retiring—manifesting many of the traits of a recluse—he had an eminently social genius. He never forgot the admonition which he voiced in his Yale valedictory—"live for your fellow men." In a very significant sense the work of his life was to spread the gospel of beauty.

In the early fifties, when he was beginning his career as a public speaker, he wrote a lecture entitled "The Uses of Beauty," which he frequently read in many parts of the country. It was a plea for beauty in all the departments of life, an urging upon the public of "the profit and necessity of blending taste, or the sentiment of beauty, with the practical aims of life, and with whatever perfects civilization." In that sentence, it seems to me, he summarized what was to be one of the most compelling motives of his life, and indicated one of the results to which the influence of his life most

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powerfully contributed. It was his conviction that beauty should permeate every detail of life from the simplest acts of domestic service to the most conspicuous acts in the life of a nation. "The truth is," he one time wrote in speaking of American life, "the truth is, beauty with us, and its perception, is too much reckoned a thing apart from the aims and appliances of every-day life." I shall later show what effect Mr. Mitchell's conviction and practice had upon his own home life.

He saw and emphasized the urgent need of instilling this sentiment of beauty into school-children and thus of reaching the life of the nation at its source. He pointed out the wisdom of endeavoring at the earliest possible moment to quicken the senses and perceptions of American youth. It should not be forgotten that he was among the pioneers who sought to bring about better conditions in our educational system.

Is it not possible [he asked] to give the school-boy some more correct notion of elegance or harmony than he is apt to derive from the shapeless mass of timber and clapboards in which he finds the rudiments of his education? Is the desk at which he studies, whittled all over into vulgar fractions, a good model for any cabinet-making genius that may lie in him? If he studies incontinently such wretched typography as *Webster's Primary Speller*, upon what, in the name of reason, can he found any notion of elegance? And when he comes himself to be the father, or curator, of a stock of boys, will he not in all likelihood, repeat the old design, school-house, desk, primer, and all?

Suppose, however, that the building where his ideas of form begin development were a modest but perfect type of some accredited form of architecture; suppose that the interior walls were decorated with some simple but well and firmly drawn illustrations of geogra-



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phy, or of natural history; suppose that his desk were complete in its adaptation, and so neat in its finish that he would feel even a pen-blot like a wound, would not the boy go out from such surroundings, better fitted by reason of them, for any of the industrial arts?

Shall I say anything of those long brick factories of recitations which belong to a later period of education? Will not the kindest patrons of those institutions admit that they must suggest somewhat straggling and cubic notions of elegant architecture? And may we not possibly find, in the contrast afforded in this respect between the universities of the Old World and the New, a partial reason for that quicker taste and finer sense of the elegancies of letters which belong to the student of Oxford and of Cambridge? Is there not something in those brown walls by the Isis, hoary with age and heavy with classic sculpture, and in those rich, shaded walks along the borders of the Cam, which chimes with the mellow tones of old learning; which brings freshly down to our day the sanctity of academic groves, and which quickens and nourishes a sense of that elegance which sublimed the tread of the Grecian buskin, and which hung its votive garlands over every door of science?

If American education were somewhat mollified (and it is happily growing toward it day by day) by a recognition of taste, by admission that there were such matters as refinement and beauty, it would bear its story through all the ranks of our workers, whether in the arts, or the field. And the result could be traced in every country homestead, in every piece of mechanism, and even in the manners of the man.

Observe that I have dwelt upon the merely practical issues which might flow from a fuller development of our perceptions of beauty in connection with education, and have laid no stress upon that enlargement of faculties which waits upon the search for elegance. That eye which in youth is quick to perceive beauty is quick also to perceive truth. . . .<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See also one of his early opinions on this same subject in the *New Englander*, 1.207, April 1843.

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The beauty of architecture which he so zealously advocated has come to Yale. Over the forward-looking youth of the old college, the towers of Harkness Memorial Quadrangle now keep watch. The silent influence of sculptured face and storied line is felt at every archway. Within the courts of this sublime achievement of architecture the eyes of youth, quickened to a perception of beauty, may indeed be quickened to a perception of truth. It is pleasant to record that one of the Branford Court entries of the Harkness Quadrangle has been named in honor of Mr. Mitchell. It is a fitting tribute not alone to his authorship but even more to his recognition and advocacy of the meaning and the influence of great architecture. His alma mater has done well thus to associate his name with her greatest triumph in the realm of the beautiful.

Into commerce and the mechanic arts, likewise, Mr. Mitchell believed it possible to infuse the sentiment of beauty. "Taste," he wrote, "gives interludes to the merchant's life of toil. It gives him holiday with his flowers, his family, his library. It softens his habit, it mellows his talk, it adorns his home with objects that make home cherished. It changes his country retreat from a fashionable prison-house into a hearty and honest enjoyment. It stocks his bookshelves with what throws grace upon his calling. It fits him to wear with dignity and ease such civic employment as his wealth may bestow upon him." With regard to the mechanic arts he felt that "their perfection waits only upon hands guided by a love and a study of the beautiful."

The ugliness, the glaring utilitarianism of most American agricultural life was painful to him. "I do not quite understand," he wrote, "why the American character, which has shown such wonderful aptitude for thrift in other directions,

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should have shown so little in the direction of agriculture. . . . The American is not illiberal by nature; a thousand proofs lie to the contrary; but by an unfortunate traditional belief he is disposed to count the land only a rigorous step-dame from which all possible benefit is to be wrested, and the least possible return made.”<sup>1</sup>

He recognized that such impoverishment of the land came as a result of wrong values; that it was an evidence of unimaginative greed and lack of refinement. He felt the American need of “culture to refine, and taste to appreciate”; he realized how much our newer, rawer civilization had to learn from the older civilization of Europe. “Burke says somewhere with his wonderful improvisation of truth, ‘To make our country loved, our country ought to be lovely,’” he told the public. “And what are we doing,” he asked, “toward toning down the roughnesses of our landscape and giving to it that softness and those charms which are indications of culture and feeling? And here let me observe that true taste in this regard interferes in no way with economy or with farming thrift. The British agriculturist does not lessen his gains by the trimness of his hedges, nor the peasant spoil his day’s work by breathing the fragrance of the mignonette at his door. Every farm-yard in the land may have its wealth of trees, every pasturage its clump of shade, every garden its trellised arbor, every rivulet from the hills its offices of rural economy to fulfill.”

It was partly to demonstrate the soundness of this doctrine that Mr. Mitchell created Edgewood. He liked such concrete way of teaching. “Good example,” he was fond of insisting, “will do very much in way of reform—more in most instances than any zeal of impeachment.”<sup>2</sup> And so

<sup>1</sup> *Out-of-Town Places*, 14.

<sup>2</sup> *Out-of-Town Places*, 102.

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through many years Edgewood continued, in the words of Mr. Arthur Reed Kimball, "to embody fidelity to an ideal in a way perhaps unmatched by any other home in America." During the sixties Mr. Mitchell constructed a roadway along the ridge behind the house as a means of giving freer access to his grounds, and regularly on Wednesdays and Saturdays his gates were open to the public. The pilgrims who came to Edgewood departed with quickened senses, and helped to disseminate still more widely the far-reaching influence of Mr. Mitchell's gospel of beauty.

He was frequently told that the public was not yet ready to adopt his teaching, and it is doubtless true that he often felt the loneliness of the pioneer. Apathy often disappointed, it never discouraged, him. "I know I am writing in advance of the current practice in these respects," he once said; "but I am equally sure that I am not writing in advance of the current practice fifty years hence, if only the schools are kept open. The reputation of a town for order, for neatness, for liberality, or taste is even now worth something, and it is coming to be worth more, year by year."<sup>1</sup> He clearly realized that a part of his work was to convince the public of the practicability of carrying out his teaching, to assure them that it was not in violation of practical aims. "I have dwelt upon this point," he wrote in 1867, "because I love to believe and to teach that in these respects true taste and true economy are accordant, and that the graces of life, as well as the profits, may be kept in view by every ruralist, whether farmer or amateur."<sup>2</sup> By example and by word he strove to impress upon his countrymen the fact that taste and economy harmonize. He was a witness to the truth, a witness who never despaired of ultimate triumph. "I feel sure," he

<sup>1</sup> *Out-of-Town Places*, 161-162.

<sup>2</sup> *Out-of-Town Places*, 188.

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wrote in closing the articles which went to make up *Out-of-Town Places*, "I feel sure that the highest beauty of landscape will ultimately bring no loss; and I forecast confidently the time—perhaps a century hence—when all the beauties and all the economies and all the humanities will be in leash." <sup>1</sup>

Mr. Mitchell believed just as firmly that the sentiment of beauty should underlie all our social development. Indeed, he always held that a refined taste counted for much more than a knowledge of conventions. "Taste and refinement more than anything besides make the gentleman," he maintained. "Indeed, essential politeness is nothing more than kindness joined to grace. To be gentle without being kind, involves a paradox. But kindness to be known must have expression. It may have rude expression; but if it have beautiful expression, what we call manner is perfected."

It can readily be seen that here was a man for whom the sentiment of beauty was an ever-present ideal. In this respect he was a Grecian, and it is not extravagant to say that the work which he accomplished in harmony with such ideal is a part of the immortality of perfection. I cannot do better than to close with words of his own: "With the Greeks the sentiment of beauty was a constantly pervading impulse, coloring their whole life and action. Streets, houses, marbles, gardens, speech, and manner were all blazing with it. . . . The spirit of beauty, when once it has entered so thoroughly into the life of a nation as it did into the life of those great Greeks, can never die. Death is not a word that reaches it."

<sup>1</sup> *Out-of-Town Places*, 323.

## XVI

### QUIET HEROISM

We are our own masters, and we can battle just as stoutly against the world as we do choose.—D. G. M. in note-book, Portland, Maine, September 18th, 1852.

After Mr. Mitchell's retirement to Edgewood, newspapers and magazines frequently spoke of him as living in "lettered ease," and it was doubtless popularly believed that Ik Marvel was dreaming out an ideal existence far from the cares and anxieties of the busy world. The legend was pretty and idyllic, but altogether untrue. Lettered ease, Mr. Mitchell never knew. To be sure, Edgewood was a place of beauty and of quiet—increasingly so with each year; but it was on earth, and not in heaven; very often the wavering shadows of care fell athwart its quietude, and remained long. Indeed, the whole course of Mr. Mitchell's life demanded high courage. Confronted from his earliest years by bodily weaknesses, and by sorrows which touched him closely, he had nevertheless shown no lack of resolution and fortitude. Against all obstacles he had struggled to a reasonable strength of body, and had won for himself a home and a position in the world. Now, by an unexpected turn of fortune, he found himself confronted by a task that was for years to try his whole strength. His quiet and persistent struggle to pay for Edgewood, and to maintain it for the purposes he had in mind, constitutes what was perhaps the greatest heroism of his long life. The experience developed in the entire Mitchell family the finest qualities of character; under the



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necessities laid upon them each one gained in strength of will and temper of mind. A part of the meaning of Edgewood arises from the fact that it was a home of serious intent, straightforward purpose, active endeavor, and earnest living.

The purchase of the original 200-acre tract of Edgewood involved Mr. Mitchell in a first debt. The agricultural successes of the first years brought a desire for increased acreage; indeed, for a time Mr. Mitchell developed a pronounced case of land-fever, in consequence of which the area of Edgewood was enlarged to almost 360 acres. Of course these additional purchases meant increased debt. Once, in order to insure possession of a contiguous tract of land, Mrs. Mitchell sold the diamonds which formed a part of her dowry. For a time all went well. With the Civil War, however, came added financial burdens. Costs of development and repair were meanwhile steadily growing. Within a dozen years, the old homestead, in a state of uncertain repair even in 1855, was falling into decay. Moreover, it had become entirely inadequate to the accommodation of the rapidly increasing family. The new Edgewood—the present homestead—intended as it was for a large family, was completed in 1872, at a cost probably exceeding \$20,000. It necessitated, of course, a proportionate operating expense. At the time of these additional purchases of land, and the building of the new home, a pronounced real-estate and building activity in New Haven led Mr. Mitchell to anticipate a large increase in the value of his holdings. He thought it certain that in consequence of the city's extension to the westward he would realize a goodly sum from that portion of his land which lies east of what is now Forest Street. All of his anticipations failed of immediate realization. The development of New Haven for the time was in another

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direction. The severe financial depression of the seventies came on, and left him burdened with a debt of over \$50,000. It was a staggering blow for a man of his health and temperament.

Almost immediately after the purchase of Edgewood in 1855 Mr. Mitchell attacked the problem of debt. He lectured on history, literature, art, and agriculture; he wrote for newspapers and magazines; he did editorial work on the *Atlantic Almanac*; he turned actively to landscape-gardening; and all the time pushed the productive capacity of his farmlands to the utmost. Once, in 1868, when he was called to the editorship of *Hearth and Home* at a salary of \$5,000 a year, it seemed to him that a way out had opened. During the two years of his editorial work he usually spent at least three days of each week in New York City. Railway travel necessitated leaving New Haven at 5.30 in the morning, and reaching Edgewood late at night. It was strenuous work for a man never strong. Even this difficult and wearing enterprise ended with the financial disaster which overtook the publishers. When the business depression of the seventies came on, he once more set himself resolutely to the heavy work of reducing a vastly increased burden of debt.

To form a proper conception of Mr. Mitchell's character it is necessary to remember the conditions of temperament and health and outward circumstance against which he struggled. We need to keep in mind his sensitive, often moody, nature—now depressed by illness, again shaken by severe neuralgic headaches. The public knew nothing of all this. Only the members of his own family, and a few intimate friends, knew the difficulties which beset him. Inasmuch as he accomplished his life-work in defiance of physical

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weaknesses, they must not be overemphasized. The portrait would not be faithful, however, without a proper blending of these shadows.

With the exception of his wife, to no one did Mr. Mitchell reveal more of his inner feeling than to W. H. Huntington. Their wide separation during many years served only to increase their friendship, and gave occasion for the frequent writing of long letters. I shall give first a portion of one of Mr. Mitchell's letters dated August 20th, 1858:

If you had wife and children, and farm, and cows, and pigs, and chickens, and hay to cut, and corn to hoe, and muck to dig, and bills to pay (for family groceries), you would understand why I have not answered sooner. Of course you haven't any of these things on your hands, or thoughts, and of course you are as recreant and gleeful as an oldish boy of six or seven and thirty can be. Of course you have made a mistake in not having some of these cares on your thought; and of course you know it, and admit it; and of course you don't mean to mend; and of course you won't; and of course you know all this; of course you do.

But isn't it odd how life leans sharply toward the ending after five and thirty? Did it ever occur to you? It makes me scratch my head very nervously sometimes; not that any great desire of doubling life is entertained—very far from it; but the oppressive weight of the superficialities and good-for-nothingnesses which have given it body so far, is hard to bear. I am going to make a fairish potato crop this year—quite so; what then? It seems as if thirty and odd years of suns and showers, glorious noons and all sorts of moonlight and that kind of thing, ought to work out something more than power, and satisfaction, and content, in the matter of a fairish potato crop.

I am a little ailing to-night, as you see; but shan't stave out the sickly colors that come first to hand, in painting a letter for you.

I haven't accomplished much pen-ways since you left; partly

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because such agreeable and altogether fascinating *inertium* belongs to this country quiet; partly because the villainously blue times have not favored any speculative literary projects; partly because things literary are inch by inch losing their charms for me; partly because (an old reason with you) I don't want to.

Then again living outside of cities, and outside the clash that comes of every day's outlook and listening to the world's din, disposes a man to silence. Long and far-off listening makes one apter to listen than to talk; and you know here in the country talking chances are rare, I mean the chances that test a man, and summon his rusty capabilities, and oil them and brighten them. . . .

. . . I should like to give you some book commissions, but am too poor. My pay to the panic has been about \$4,000 lost cleanly, and to make it worse, all by my own folly.

If there was any one thing which Mr. Mitchell grew to dislike more than another it was public lecturing. Notwithstanding his aversion to the work, it was generally his custom until the outbreak of the Civil War to give a portion of the winter months to extended lecture tours. A letter written to Mrs. Mitchell from Cincinnati, Ohio, December 13th, 1859, helps us to understand his feeling, and to appreciate some of the difficulties under which he labored:

I didn't know how dependent I was upon you . . . till I came so far away from you, or allowed you to go so far away from me. If it were not for the continual excitement of change, and the constant fight against all the vexations of travel here in this raw, crude, half-civilized West, I should grow terribly blue.

To-day I am from Columbus, Ohio, where I lectured last night to a crowded, and upon the whole, most sympathetic, house I have had yet. . . . There, as also at Dayton, where I lectured to an *un-sympathetic* audience the night previous, the papers report my

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audience as "the most crowded of the season." The great trouble is with the *too quiet* and subdued character of the lecture. Western taste; that is to say, the mass of it, craves something more *high falutin*. The best people, however, and cultivated ones, are, I am sure, satisfied. . . .

I suppose I have told you all about my Cincinnati lecture; how it was crowded; how a good many in the far part did not hear me. Indeed, my voice has suffered from old throat trouble first begun in New York; and though last night my voice was strong enough again, yet the cold has settled into a somewhat worrisome cough, which if I do not break into more manageable condition by my Monday's lecture at Chillicothe, I shall be compelled to forego my western appointments. Have I told you of these? Chicago, Milwaukee, Madison, Kenosha, Lafayette, St. Louis, besides Detroit, Michigan University, New Albany, Louisville, Indianapolis, Springfield, Evansville, Zanesville—all of which latter I have been compelled to decline on the score of time. If I were well *fully*, and could fill all these, it would be worth the doing; but——

[E]ven now, if this cold keeps on me, I may not get to Chicago; if so, all the worse, and we must struggle against the fates and January bills a little longer. . . . If I do *not* go West, I shall start directly for New Haven, make provision against January accounts as I best can, and sail for Charleston to join you. . . . I trust, however, I may be able to struggle through. . . . How unfortunate that just at this time of my greatest need of strength, I should have my only hard cold these two years. Well, as you would say, we mustn't quarrel with Providence. . . .

I regret *over and over* not having brought my grandiloquent and absurd lecture about Beauty. It would have hit Western taste in *the eye*, and I should have succeeded, and been ashamed of myself for doing it. . . .

I never learned to love so much as now the quiet of a country home, and I long for it every hour I am absent, or you are absent. It is all *fudge* about my being out of place, or losing place there.

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The truth is I put a lower and lower estimate upon reputation every hour I live, and have I not reason? That lecture on Beauty, so bombastic and sophomoric that I should have been ashamed to print it with my name, used to call down twice the applause and content that this labored and delicately wrought one on Venice does. I find that all the most artfully worked allusions, and most carefully worded analogies, and historic comparisons fall absolutely *still-born*, while my old rodomontade of five years ago was *prodigious*. Is this not enough to make one undervalue, or rather not value at all, the puff of popular favor? In very truth, if it were not to pay off the farm debts, I do not believe I would ever put pen to paper again in the world.

You see that this [is] in blue vein, and you will quarrel with it. I expect that. But you will half-acquiesce when I tell you that I enjoy *infinitely more* a week with you and the children than all the lecture applause that could be crowded into a twelvemonth. . . .

Frequently the struggle seemed interminable, and all ways to final victory closed. A portion of a letter to Huntington reveals the depths from which Mr. Mitchell sometimes had to rise:

I am shabby, I know; I am careless, I know; I ought to have answered your last, long ago, I know. But what then? We both fail to do so many things we ought to do, that we will lump together our sins of omission, and cry to the wall. I am just at this time, 2d January '67, and for two weeks last past, suffering from the severest, and most unyielding, and most *devilish* fit of the blues which ever before oppressed me; so I warn you fairly, look for the blueness tingeing every edge of this sheet! It is a shame, I know and confess to myself when I hear those little feet pattering up and down the stairs, and when the rosy faces come setting themselves into door-cracks, as innocents look through bars at wild beasts in the menageries. But what then? The mere consciousness of the foulness of the thing makes it hang more heavily. I sometimes



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think I have made a grand mistake in fronting this country isolation as I have done, and in trying to brave it down; for in it lies much of the secret of the blueness. Sometimes the hills, and trees, and coppices, and walks that have enamored, and do still so enamor me, seem only a devil's net-work against which I kick and struggle vainly, and they leashing me all the more surely.

By 1868, it seemed to Mr. Mitchell that he must relinquish Edgewood. "The truth is," he informed Huntington, "I can't keep it up now with any decency; it is too big for me, without better manager than I am in the way of securing. It has been a dearish old place, and I should hate to say a quittance; but fear it must be." His fear, however, was not realized. With 1869 came a prospect of better things. Three years later the new homestead was built. The intense application of the past was, however, now telling upon him with each year. "Life has turned wearily with me since the fifty is marked," he confided to Huntington in 1872, "and a great depression has come over me by reason of fierce headaches that have racked me fearfully. I hope you fight the years more courageously and hopefully." These sentences are nevertheless followed by suggestions of further books, and the first outlines of *Old Story Tellers*. "When shall we ever see you again?" he asks in closing. "It would lift away two years from my head to see you and talk with you. A new house I have just built (we being now in agony of removal, with the terrible dilapidation of the old library) will give you cover, whenever you will. But I never count on the happiness in the new that has belonged to the old."

A few years later a period of business depression made matters still more difficult. Huntington and other friends came forward with offers of financial aid, but as usual Mr.

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Mitchell hesitated to accept. On the 20th of November 1876, he wrote to Huntington as follows:

Of course it is easy, looking back, to see where my follies and un wisdom have come in—most of all in counting upon our high-tides of three years ago, when it seemed my land here would realize enough to keep me safe, and to build a house which, seeing that the old one was in tumble-down condition, would give roof enough to shelter us all; so I built—and larger than I should—and went in debt—and counted on sales to help me—and the dead time came and stranded me, with all sorts of taxes at their highest, and all chances of income at the lowest. With the hopefulness and quick blood which belonged to forty (æ.) 't would not have been so unbearable; but anxieties and sleeplessness at fifty-four set astir all the weakly and wayward currents in a man's brain, and with me have intensified the old neuralgic tendencies, and kept me lashed into a dreadfully barren unrest. I am trying to do what I can in lucid intervals; and wife and children through all, and in prospect of whatever may come, are most helpful and cheery and willingly disposed. It would do your heart good to see how thoughtful and kindly they are!

I have offered my whole place for sale at thirty to forty per cent. less than would have been counted a fair price three years ago; but there is not even an enquirer. . . .

I hardly know what to say of your most kindly offer. In our straits, it tempts overmuch; yet I reluctate, seeing how far off may be repayment. But after all, necessities may force acceptance, and if such come—and forced sales—I think there will be enough to pay up all debts, whatever may be left to us. . . . That break-down of the *Hearth and Home*, which I thought offered reliable work in my line, was a fearful discouragement to me. Judd and original owners sank over \$200,000 in it.

Many other friends of Mr. Mitchell would have been glad to assist him, but an intense dislike of allowing others to

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assume his burdens prevented him from accepting such aid. Almost alone he carried through the task until the members of his own household were in position to help. There could be no more eloquent testimony to the love and fortitude inspired by a father and a mother than the manner in which every son and daughter of Edgewood—and I include those who came into the family by marriage—assisted in saving the well-loved home. Nor must I fail to make mention of the generous help given by Mr. Mitchell's brother Alfred.

I need not record in further detail the progress of the long struggle to final freedom from debt. It is enough to say that Mitchell confronted the task with all the courage and persistence of Sir Walter Scott. The public knew almost nothing of this chapter of his life. The following passage from a letter of November 10th, 1882, to his daughter Elizabeth, who was then travelling with her uncle in England, reveals something of the quiet resignation into which he grew: "I wish . . . I could know what seat you held in the railroad carriage on trip to London, and so have looked out with you at the ravishing things you will have seen. Isn't it a contrast with the Woodbridge roads? Well, I had a dream once of making some little spot of New England just as green and neat and flower-ful, and just as fragrant with all the winningest of rusticities; but the dream broke long ago when the purse bottom dropped out, and my only hope now is that the heaven to which such badish people as I may go, will have its green fields, and roses, and oak trees, and pleasant driving places, and such visitors as you! Don't spurn my theology, I pray you; for it grows out of my cheerfulest way of thinking of which there has not been overmuch since your going away." Only now and then was a sharp cry wrung from him. "I come by money so scantily nowadays,"

## QUIET HEROISM

he wrote to his publisher, Charles Scribner, August 16th, 1889, "that I clutch at it with a sharpness that shames me. I hope for a country some day (to live in) where money isn't needed." His experience led him to deprecate borrowing. "Don't *run in debt*—no matter what your pay may be," he wrote to his son Donald, April 5th, 1884. "Wear homespun, and eat corn-cake if necessary rather than run in debt. I tell you this with an earnestness that is sharpened by the *torture* I have felt for years. Don't plan to spend *just* your income; it is like trying to balance yourself on a fine wire. Plan always to have a *little over* to put to next year's, or next month's account."

It is pleasant to know that after the long struggle Mr. Mitchell with mind at ease lived to enjoy Edgewood, and to rest in the assurance that it would pass on to his children. It is pleasing, also, to record that his judgment has been vindicated. New Haven has no more beautiful residential district than that which is now building on the plain below the shadows of Edgewood. And were the Master of Edgewood alive to-day, he could see the fruitage of his example in the charming and well-kept homes that cluster upon his old farmlands. He would doubtless feel that the difficult task was, after all, well worth performing; that the struggle did avail.

## XVII

### HOME LIFE

Poets and places beguile one to roam,  
Yet pleasantest paths lead evermore home!

—D. G. M. in letter to his daughter Harriet.

Not bread, nor meat, nor wine,  
But fire on hearth, and cheer in grateful hearts  
Make home divine.

—D. G. M's inscription for mahogany panel in the home of  
his daughter, Mary Mitchell Ryerson.

Mr. Mitchell's warmest affections centred in his home. To him the very word was one of the richest and most meaningful in the English language, one that quickened his memory and inspired his hope. "From my soul I pity him whose soul does not leap at the mere mention of that name," he once wrote. As we are well aware, his love of home was not a quick-blossoming, transient affection; it was long-nurtured, deep-rooted, permanent. From the sorrows and broken hopes of childhood, from the wanderings and restlessness of early manhood, he turned always to a vision of home as the goal of earthly happiness. Always, too, he associated the home of his dreams with the songs of birds, the color and the perfume of flowers, and the shadows of great trees. For these he deliberately turned his back upon the city, and all that it had to offer of social distinction and popular applause.

We have seen how he grew inevitably toward Edgewood. There, so far as earth permits, he realized his dreams. There, beyond any doubt, his virtues best grew. Edgewood be-

came the retreat from which he could be lured seldom and only with difficulty. His love of home gradually weaned him from the world. "Some of my friends call me a recluse," he once said, "but I do not mean to be one." And yet he early recognized the loosening of other ties. "I love home and homely subjects," run the opening words of one of his lectures, "but I think you will understand me when I say that the very love I bear the subject is one which stands grievously in the way of that public life which alone fits a man to be a public talker." In comparison with a home all other things to a man of such nature were but loss.

Edgewood was, indeed, the creation of a man who knew clearly just what he had in mind. Of the purposes which actuated the outdoor life, I have already written. Equally definite notions governed the finer issues of the life beneath the roof-tree. "Whatever house is to make a true home," Mr. Mitchell wrote, "must be lived in, and carry smack of hospitality all over." The Edgewood homesteads fulfilled this requirement. For seventeen years the original farmhouse, a low, rambling structure distinguished by a restful coziness and an "old-fashioned humility," sheltered the family. This was the house which we must always associate with *Wet Days* and *My Farm of Edgewood*, the house in which all but three of the Mitchell children were born. Mr. Mitchell loved its air of old-fashioned ease and comfort, and with the greatest reluctance decided upon its removal.<sup>1</sup> When he turned to building anew, he sought to perpetuate all its desirable features; and in consequence the present home, though larger, retains much of the atmosphere and many of the charming qualities of the old.

I have spoken of Edgewood as a creation, and so it was,

<sup>1</sup> See his description of the old library window in *My Farm of Edgewood*, 333-337.



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both indoors and out. For Mr. Mitchell, as I have taken care to observe, always worked deliberately. He thought of a home as a living organism, as a thing subject to growth and change, not as a thing finished once for all.

The home and its apartments should not be treated as a dead thing, where we make best arrangement of its fittings and there leave it. It must grow in range and in expression with our necessities, and diverging and developing tastes. The best of decorators cannot put that last finish which must come from home hands. It is a great canvas always on the easel before us—growing in its power to interest every day and year—never getting its last touches—never quite ready to be taken down and parted with. No home should so far out-top the tastes of its inmates that they cannot somewhere and somehow deck it with the record of their love and culture. It is an awful thing to live in a house where no new nail can be driven in the wall, and no tray of wild flowers, or of wood mosses, be set upon a window sill.<sup>1</sup>

For upward of fifty-four years Mr. Mitchell wrought at Edgewood in the spirit of the foregoing passage. The present homestead has all the atmosphere of a house that is to be lived in. It is not, and never was intended to be, a show-place. Its woodwork, having only the stain of natural color, never carried an appearance of newness and gloss. The windows, light and roomy, afford abundant space for flowers. Water-drops only add to the stains of age which are gradually mellowing the colors of the wood. Within, the house everywhere suggests room, breadth, comfort.

Almost a quarter of a century before the present homestead was constructed, Ik Marvel was weaving his visions of the future; and this is the home of which he dreamed:

<sup>1</sup> *Bound Together*, 282.

## HOME LIFE

The cottage is no mock cottage, but a substantial, wide-spreading cottage with clustering gables and ample shade—such a cottage as they build upon the slopes of Devon. Vines clamber over it, and the stones show mossy through the interlacing climbers. There are low porches with cozy arm-chairs, and generous oriels fragrant with mignonette and the blue-blossoming violets. The chimney-stacks rise high, and show clear against the heavy pine-trees that ward off the blasts of winter. . . . Within the cottage the library is wainscoted with native oak; and my trusty gun hangs upon a branching pair of antlers. . . . An old-fashioned mantel is above the brown stone jambs of the country fireplace, and along it are distributed records of travel. . . . Massive chairs stand here and there in tempting attitude; strewn over an oaken table in the middle are the uncut papers and volumes of the day; and upon a lion's skin stretched before the hearth is lying another Tray.<sup>1</sup>

Almost without the change of a word that description fits the Edgewood home. Few dreams have ever been realized so fully, or in such minute detail. The dream, in fact, was none other than the unfolding plan of the home-builder.

Absorbed in the duties and the pleasures of such a home, it is not strange that Mr. Mitchell was content to let the world go its way. Soon after his retirement to Edgewood an old friend said of him that he was "the most married man" she had ever known. There was truth in the remark. Much of the happiness and contentment of his life grew out of his fortunate marriage. Mrs. Mitchell was by nature hopeful and buoyant—a lover of human fellowships. She knew how to counteract her husband's moods of depression and melancholy. She knew, also, how to respect those seasons when he wished to be alone and undisturbed. She had

<sup>1</sup> *Reveries of a Bachelor*, 286–288.

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remarkable business ability, and administered the affairs of her large household with consummate skill. She identified herself whole-heartedly with the development of Edgewood, and bore without complaint what were undoubtedly for her very actual burdens of loneliness and isolation. Had he searched long and painstakingly he could scarcely have found a woman better suited to his nature. He had recognized almost at their first meeting the qualities which made her necessary to him, and he never ceased to pay tribute to them. "More than ever I miss you now, my dearest wife; more than ever, when the clouds come, and the rain keeps me indoors, I feel the want of you to drive away false humors, to quicken my courage, to cheer me, and to make me cling even to the vanities of life," he wrote on the 2d of June 1855. "I feel now, too, more than ever how much more to me you are, and always have been, than a hundred friends, or all the acquaintances in the world." Again, on the 14th of December 1859, he wrote in half-playful, half-serious mood to Mrs. Mitchell, who was then visiting her South Carolina home. After a reference to his wife's report that her sister, Susan Pringle, was charmed with the little Paris-born daughter, he continued: "It would be strange (here's fatherly vanity for you!) if she were not. I ache in heart when I think how blind, and mad, and selfish a world she must grow into; run off from us (as you did), wilt under some selfish, quarrelsome husband's humors (as you do), and bear it all with that sweet womanly devotion and doubled love (as you do)." The sentiments expressed in these letters only deepened with the years, as extracts from his letters given elsewhere in this biography, sufficiently emphasize. In 1883 the graceful rededication of *Reveries of a Bachelor*—"To one at home in whom are met so many of the graces and the vir-

Wm. G. &  
C. H. Pringle.



MARY FRANCES PRINGLE.  
*After a daguerreotype taken in 1850.*



tues of which as bachelor I dreamed"—confirmed them. Of all praise, he valued most highly that which came from his wife; and it must be said that she knew how to praise heartily and sincerely. "Here I am," she wrote from Chicago in 1892, "after a charming journey made much shorter by the re-reading of *Dream Life*, which I took to glance over, but read every word; and it all seemed heartier and truer and better than ever." It was in such ways that she encouraged him and helped to banish the melancholy humors of his temperament. Hers was, indeed, a nature of sunshine and optimism.

As a matter of fact, Edgewood, however shadowed at times by circumstance, was always and essentially a place of animation and cheer. Abounding life made it so. Mr. and Mrs. Mitchell became the parents of eleven children—seven girls and four boys—and in consequence their home was the centre of a large social activity which radiated a vital heartiness.<sup>1</sup> For years youth reigned at Edgewood. There was "a baby in the family" until well after 1875. In the companionship of wife and children Mr. Mitchell found recompense for his renunciation of the world. In such a home it was impossible to be a recluse. The head of so large a family was in no danger of becoming unsocial.

<sup>1</sup> The roll of the children follows:

Hesse Alston 1st, b. June 5th, 1854; d. Dec. 27th, 1861.

Mary Pringle, b. Aug. 28th, 1855; married Edward L. Ryerson, Dec. 3d, 1879.

Elizabeth Woodbridge, b. Dec. 26th, 1856.

Pringle, b. Sept. 5th, 1858; married Kathrin Mower, June 23d, 1886; d. July 2d, 1900.

Susan Pringle, b. July 3d, 1860; married James Mason Hoppin, Oct. 1st, 1895.

Donald Grant, b. Dec. 9th, 1861; married Mary Dews Reese, Dec. 3d, 1889.

Hesse Alston 2d, b. Sept. 14th, 1863.

Rebecca Motte, b. Jan. 20th, 1865; married Walter T. Hart, June 3d, 1889.

Harriet Williams, b. Jan. 20th, 1870.

James Alfred, b. June 14th, 1871; d. Jan. 2d, 1892.

Walter Louis, b. March 11th, 1875; married Esther R. Buckner, June 2d, 1906.



## THE LIFE OF DONALD G. MITCHELL

Throughout his life Mr. Mitchell was a lover of children, counting them

better than all the ballads  
That ever were sung or said.

“I never warmed toward a jewel, except it were a child,” he wrote to his daughter Susan in 1896. He was never unmindful of a child’s feelings; never hard or indifferent in their presence; he was always eager to make them happy. His daughters have told me a delightful story of his old age. In 1907 the five-year-old daughter of a neighbor was kept at Edgewood during her mother’s serious illness. Although enfeebled by his eighty-five years, Mr. Mitchell exerted himself to entertain her. Nor had he forgotten the ways of childhood. Recalling how often promises to show them the richly colored illustrations of *Costumes Français*<sup>1</sup> had prevailed upon his own children “to be good,” he took from the library shelves one of the four large volumes, and with the little girl upon his knee, amused her with stories about the attractive pictures. The true heart of the man was in that simple, kindly act.

The memory of his own sorrowful childhood, with its brief season of unbroken home life, caused him to put all the more zeal into the making of a pleasant environment for his children. It seemed that he wished them to have a double portion of all of which he had been deprived. It was a part of his creed that to make a home loved, it ought to be lovely; and he was convinced that a home so made would become “the rallying point of the household affections through all time. No sea so distant but the memory of a cheery, sunlit home-room, with its pictures on the wall, and its flame upon the hearth, shall haunt the voyager’s thought; and the

<sup>1</sup> Published by A. Miffliez, Paris, 1835.

## HOME LIFE

flame upon the hearth, and the sunlit window, will pave a white path over the intervening waters, where tenderest fancies, like angels shall come and go." It was not a creed which he held lightly. "There is a deeper philosophy in this," he continued, "than may at first sight appear. Who shall tell us how many a breakdown of a wayward son is traceable to the cheerless aspect of his own home and fire-side?"<sup>1</sup> In his opinion, the home was the true bulwark of a nation; and upon such belief he founded all his notions of child-training.

Edgewood was, of course, an almost ideal home for children. On all sides the book of nature lay wide open before them. At the earliest dawn of consciousness beauty confronted and informed their spirits. The father was at once friend, companion, and teacher. They shared his walks and drives; they absorbed his enthusiasms. He instructed them in all country lore, teaching them the secrets of the shy, almost invisible, life of the hedgerows and the coppices, and searching out for them the haunts of the most humble wild things. Under his guidance they came to know the trees, the flowers, and the birds, with a closeness of observation acquired only from such companionship. The wooded hills were enchanted regions which the boys peopled with knights, dragons, Indians, and pirates; and in which the girls followed the trail of the Faerie Queene. Joy and romance were in the very air they breathed. The whole expression of their life was natural and spontaneous.

Such joyous freedom was not, however, without discipline; for Mr. Mitchell in dealing with youth remembered the Greek doctrine of nothing in excess. "Flowers and children are of near kin," he used to say, "and too much of restraint,

<sup>1</sup> *My Farm of Edgewood*, 102-103.

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or too much of forcing, or too much of display, ruins their chiefest charms." He sought, therefore, to balance the freedom and abandon of their outdoor life by a discipline not less firm and effective because it was informal and unobtrusive. Industry was inculcated by example more than by precept. As soon as a child was old enough to understand and enjoy, it was taught to perform little tasks as a part of the day's pleasure. Each child had its pets, its flowers, or its corner in the garden. There were no idlers at Edgewood. Likewise, the children came to know the beauty of simplicity in dress and in manners. Ostentation and vulgarity could not live in such an atmosphere. The silent example of both father and mother revealed how noble a thing is mastery of the spirit. Such discipline wrought its perfect work—that beautiful quietness and order which became a distinguishing feature of the Mitchell home.

Mr. Mitchell combined confidence in work with an equal confidence in the desirability of making education attractive. In his opinion, the virtues of Puritanism were not dependent upon the severities of its old educational practice, and he sought earnestly to protect youth from the monotony which marred much of his early life. He believed that only the blundering stupidity of elders could quench the youthful desire to know. It was his custom to take advantage of a child's curiosity; to lure the eager mind from one conquest to another. By evening readings he inspired his children with a love of literature and history. He aroused their interest in language work by holding before them the hope of foreign travel. He secured practice in composition by encouraging them to write letters and to edit little newspapers. One copy of the *Edgewood Times* has been preserved—the work of James Alfred when ten years old. The heading of the paper

was drawn by the father, and the "news" evidently prepared under his direction. There was in this play no feigning of enjoyment on the part of Mr. Mitchell; he delighted in these activities. His enthusiasm was contagious, and the children followed his leading gladly.

He watched with quick, fatherly pride the development of each child, turning, as it would seem, with wistful fondness to the sons of his old age. Writing to his daughter Elizabeth on the 1st of June 1883, in regard to the thirtieth anniversary of his marriage, he remarked: "Walter put his pocket-money together . . . and bought a clematis for your mother, we two going together . . . for the purchase. He is a rare boy—that Walter; he and James as generous as the skies." He never failed to mark traits of developing character, and knew well how to humor and direct the eager spirit of youth. In a letter of April 20th, 1888, to his daughter Susan, occur the following sentences: "Walter is all agog with his high school entry, beginning with to-day, examination. He's a bright boy, we think, and what's better, has the capacity for a good deal of dogged work. James has been figuring at the balls which close up the high school term, and is quite the leader of *ton* in our household. My authority in cravats has lapsed."

As the young people grew toward manhood and womanhood, Mr. Mitchell identified himself more and more closely with their interests and activities. He taught them to make much of holidays and birthday anniversaries, emphasizing the fact that little, inexpensive gifts could often carry with them more of suggestion and affectionate remembrance than gifts more ostentatious and costly. Often he would send to an absent child one of his own drawings of a favorite bit of Edgewood scenery, or of a family pet, or of whatever else

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he thought would kindle home memories and affections. Beyond all else he was careful to write frequent and cheery letters to those who had gone out from the home circle to establish firesides of their own, and struggle to make a place for themselves in the world. Indeed, his practice in this respect was in keeping with a lifelong conviction. "Letter writing is a home office to cultivate," he always maintained. "Write letters, and you will find them all through life, delightful, airy windows opening out upon other spheres, and bringing sweet voices to your table and your hearth, giving new quality to home cheer and home talk by their contrasts, and opening with the postman's knock breezy corridors through which troops of friends may trip to give you greeting, and electrify you by spiritual contact." No child of his but had abundant reason to feel thankful for such teaching and such practice. On many occasions joys were heightened, gloom was dispelled, and sorrows were alleviated by the letters which the father seemed never too busy, too weary, or too old to write.

He lived to become the companion of a merry group of grandchildren. With them he roamed again the Edgewood ways, and taught once more to eager youth the secrets of the outdoor world. In the companionship of little children he kept his spirit bright and his senses alert. For many years the Ryerson children journeyed from Chicago to spend their summers at Edgewood. In the presence of their grandfather they came to know the beauty and the wisdom of a quiet, simple life. To-day they hold the memories of Edgewood as among the richest of their lives, and count the influence of their grandfather's life as one of the most potent forces in the shaping of their character. Younger than the Ryersons were the Hart grandchildren, and the sons and daughters of Don-

ald G. Mitchell, Jr., who were also privileged for a time to know their grandfather and to experience the warmth of his affection for children. He often entertained them at Edgewood. As soon as they were old enough to write, he began to exchange letters with them. He understood that most difficult art of writing in a manner that will at once attract and uplift a child. "That was a jolly fine letter you sent me about the ice-cave, and the Cobble Hill!" he wrote to the nine-year-old Philip Hart, July 15th, 1903. "And did you see any bear tracks, or hear any growling? They tell me you have grown stouter than ever; and that you have grown good, too—which is much better; and that you look out for the enjoyment of other boys and girls, as well as your own—which is one of the best ways of growing good, and of making friends!"

He had the Scotch love for home and kindred, and as he grew older perhaps regretted those currents of American life which carry children far from the scenes of their youth. He had a strong affection for ancestral place. To his son Donald he wrote, December 29th, 1905: "I am glad to see that Don 3d has taken his initiatory drive into the Salem wilds . . . and hope he will come to love familiarity with Salem scenes and people. Glad that you have found the way to the old Shaw house, and its gardens.<sup>1</sup> Cousin Jane is a good, kindly person, and I am sure will welcome your children's visitations to the old summer house, about which some of my pleasantest boyish recollections (1834-38) cluster. I like to think of your boy growing up in sight of the same old scenes." Long before (September 1888) he had written to his daughter Elizabeth: "I'm glad you've been to Salem. My heart warms to anybody who will make a pilgrimage

<sup>1</sup> Now the home of the New London Historical Society.



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there. . . . I can't quite explain my feeling for that valley out in the wilds. . . . I wouldn't like to live there, but there's never a summer breeze can blow up the valley and the brook (of which I get any hearing at all) but it's musical to me. I had some good times there at a very impressionable age; and then the 'ancestral' twang about it, coming from the white house on the hill, and the tomb-stones, sharpens the 'good old times' feeling, and clinches it." In quite the same spirit is the dedication to the young Ryersons of the second volume of *American Lands and Letters* (1899): "To the little group of grandchildren born and bred upon the shores of that great lake where they build cities and burn them, and build exhibition palaces which outshine all exhibits, I dedicate this second volume of American talks, trusting it may find a kindly reading in their hustling western world, and spur them to keep alive that trail of home journeyings into these eastern quietudes under the trees which we gray heads love."

Mr. Mitchell had, in fact, so identified himself with the spirit of rural Connecticut that a subtle sympathy existed between him and the very soil from which he drew sustenance. He was rooted as deep among "eastern quietudes" as were the trees which shaded his roof. He had found contentment. For him Edgewood symbolized peace, comfort, seclusion. There he could indulge his idiosyncrasies; there he could be himself. To understand him aright, we must know something of his private home life.

Edgewood ministered to Mr. Mitchell's passion for solitude. At first sight, he had been strongly attracted to the farm by its comparative isolation. Behind his hedges he felt that unobserved he could go his own way in peace, and steep his soul in quiet. Even in such a home, however, he craved further seclusion, and knew seasons when he found it

necessary to withdraw from the immediate presence of his family. At such times the library was his sure retreat. There, among his books, and in communion with his own spirit, he was accustomed to remain until he had "consumed his smoke," overcome the melancholy that oppressed him, and strengthened himself for fresh contact with people. When he built the new house he planned the library for quiet and seclusion, taking especial care to arrange in such way as to avoid callers when he felt so inclined. Through a window looking out upon the front walk and the main entrance of Edgewood he could see callers before they reached the house. He even planned for those emergencies when a ring of the door-bell surprised him. The entrance to the library is around the right corner of the long hallway. Another library door gives access to a side exit opening upon a walk which leads to the hill at the rear. Such arrangement made it possible for him to leave the library before his presence there could be ascertained. Many a time his children were amused to hear the side-door close even before the bell rang. They knew that a caller was coming, and that their father was on his way to the hill to wander under the trees until the visitor had departed.

During Mr. Mitchell's life his library remained almost exactly as he described it in 1876:

The walls are finished roughly with ordinary mortar floated off and colored a dark red. The cornice is of pine, with a beading of black walnut, extending around upon the book-shelves as well as upon portions of the wall. For economy of space, the book-shelves reach to ceiling, and are also established in either blank of chimney-breast which extends into room. I find these last specially convenient, and their position has enabled me to give greater apparent breadth to chimney and greater actual breadth to mantel-piece.

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The floor has a border of yellow pine and black walnut, mitred at angles, almost two feet wide. The enclosed space, floored with ordinary white pine, is covered with English Brussels carpet of a simple geometric pattern, quite small, the colors being mainly brown or fawn-color with bits of black, white, or yellow. The carpet has a border of same predominating color, and broad band of green. An old Turkey rug is before the fire-place.

The library of 2,500 to 3,000 volumes, is quite miscellaneous, being fullest in mediæval history, encyclopædias and dictionaries, and works relating to art and agriculture. The ceiling is of bald gray mortar, only because I cannot afford to decorate it. The wood-work is almost entirely of white pine, to which effect has been given by variety of stain (in no case obscuring the grain of wood), by bits of tile, and by sparse use of paper-hanging. If I had not so many windows, I should have given the walls a lighter tint; and if I had not so little space, I should not have carried the bookshelves to the ceiling; in short, if I could have spent more money, I would have made a more noticeable room.<sup>1</sup>

During the forenoon the library, which faces the east, is filled with sunlight. The large eastern windows look out upon the flowers, the trees, the lawn, and the hedges which surround Edgewood, and the spires of New Haven rising in the distance. Between the windows is a rustic bracket in which are small busts of Gutenberg, Shakespeare, and Voltaire, the memorials of European wanderings. In Mr. Mitchell's day vines clambered over this casement-bracket, and two large boxes of flowers occupied the windows. These boxes bore favorite quotations from Shakespeare's *Cymbeline*: the one, "Fairest flowers whilst summer lasts"; the other, "Furr'd moss besides, when flowers are none." As he sat within, Mr. Mitchell could look about him with the pride

<sup>1</sup> *The Book of American Interiors.* By Charles Wyllys Elliott, pp. 76-79.

of a creator; for all was the product of his brain. He knew every book. He had chosen each picture, each bit of bric-à-brac, and loved the wealth of suggestion surrounding each. Every summer day a vase of rare design and interesting history held a new flower—the trophy of a morning walk. Throughout the winter the windows were ablaze with favorite flowers. The whole room was a treasury of beauty, of wisdom, and of memory.

As soon as the sun crossed the meridian the shadows began to gather within the library. “Edgewood has no sunset,” a visitor once ventured to remark to Mr. Mitchell. “No, but it has a sunrise. Isn’t that enough?” he replied rather sharply; and his reply was revealing. For him, as we know, sunshine and gloom followed close upon each other, and it is doubtless true that he loved neither one nor the other overmuch; but rather loved the alternation of both. A sun-filled room brought cheer to a morning of work; a shadow-haunted room brought reveries and dreams to long afternoons and evenings. When the time for fires came he found the shadowed afternoons especially attractive. The play of the firelight on the walls and over the books awakened fancies that he would not have exchanged for kingdoms. He could not explain the charm which a fireplace exercised upon him; he could only enjoy it. A wood-fire, an open hearth, a cheery blaze, flickering shadows, dreams—these he loved; these he would not forego. At Edgewood there was abundance of timber, and the wood-shed was always filled. “The days of wood-fires are not utterly gone; as long as I live, they never will be gone,” he once declared.<sup>1</sup>

Now and then a visitor was privileged to sit with Mr. Mitchell in the light of his open fire, and to catch something

<sup>1</sup> *My Farm of Edgewood*, II.

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of his spirit's fineness. "I am living a quiet life, one might call it a life of seclusion," he once confided to a caller. "My companions at present are the open grate, the embers, the birch, which does not snap sparks on the rug, contentment of mind and body." One was not likely ever to forget the play of the firelight over Mr. Mitchell's features, nor the warm rose-tint with which it suffused his snow-white hair. From his countenance nobility and benevolence shone out clearly. "It is such a face," a visitor once remarked, "as one's fancy ascribes to that good man, the Bishop of D—in *Les Misérables*."

I have already called attention to the fact that when awake Mr. Mitchell was never idle. Among the hobbies with which he occupied himself, the manufacture of rustic woodwork, map-making, and drawing in colors were chief. There are at Edgewood rustic picture-frames, clocks, cabinets, canes, and ornaments, many of which he wrought out when confined to his bed with illness. He strove to teach his children to recognize the kinds of wood best suited to rustic work, and often sent them on trial errands to gather material. At such times, any display of ignorance on their part quickly aroused his impatience. "What!" he once exclaimed, "none of you know bass-wood! After all my teaching, is it possible that a child of mine does not know bass?" Map-making was one of his greatest delights, and he always expressed the belief that in him a good cartographer was lost to the world for lack of early and skilled instruction in the art. Once when reading Ruskin's assertion in *Time and Tide* that "every youth in the state should learn to do something finely and thoroughly with his hand," Mr. Mitchell made the regretful annotation, "I might have been taught to make maps!" On his library door there yet

hangs a specimen of his handiwork in cartography—a large map of Edgewood and the surrounding country, upon which are located the minutest features of the landscape, including even the places where mushrooms flourish best. Although painting ministered to his delight in form and color, he never valued his accomplishment in it so highly as that in his other hobbies. Many of his drawings in color are preserved at Edgewood, and two of his water-color sketches are reproduced in *Chronicles of a Connecticut Farm*.

Pets abounded at Edgewood. The household was never without its favorite dog; cats found warm welcome there; and all the farm animals came to gentle and affectionate treatment. Mr. Mitchell doubtless learned to love most of all a horse which Mr. and Mrs. Ryerson gave him in 1890. No member of the family circle is likely ever to forget “Andy” and his clever ways. In a series of notes Mr. Mitchell has recorded something of his affection for this faithful companion:

The other day we left him in East Haven for a night. It galled us to do it. Would he be well cared for? Would not some slattern or heedless groom offend his sensibilities? Would he sleep well in a strange stall? Would he have good companionship over the stall partitions? Would the hay be smoky? Would his rations be regular and fair? All this disturbed us. Why should it not? I gave him occasion to rub his nose on my shoulder before parting with him, patted him on the neck, and gave him a *bonne bouche* of a lump of sugar, which he crunched in a lively and grateful way as I came out of the stable-yard.

Those baitings by the high road with which some of the more starched members of the family are disposed to quarrel, are not without their defences, their beguilements, and their essentially good philosophic and physiologic ends. For my own part, I have



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no liking for those long country rides or drives which do not permit of a "getting out" here and there for the plucking of this or that flower, for the random survey of this or that wood. It puts the last rural grace into a country ramble; it relieves of ennui; it breaks the monotony; it opens skyward and earthward loop-holes for pleasant disport. So, I am sure my good Andy has a relishy enjoyment of those little bites by the road-side—now of tall lucerne, now of a luscious mat of white clover, now of the speary, nodding heads of the twitch-grass (for which I observe he has always peculiar appetite), and again for a catch-all bite of wild wood-grass, five-fingers, young golden-rod, even bringing up the roots with their attached morsels of fragrant wood-soil, humus, silex, aluminum, and all the rest, which chemical multiple of condiments he consumes with a grateful click-clack of his jaws.

Then came this finale. I do not know how the veterinary scientists would term it, or disguise it, in Latin; but there came indications—sometimes after sharp going, sometimes without apparent provoking cause—of a poor government of the muscular tissues, an occasional tremor in them running over flank and thigh, and at last one day an involuntary, spasmodic, uncontrollable backing . . . a crouching, uncanny shivering and shrinking of all hinder parts till he sunk flattened out upon the ground. 'T would seem shafts or breeching would all have given way. But they kept whole, and he, poor fellow, shamed and righted and ballasted as it were by that touch to mother earth, rose up with a great shiver of resolve. . . . [A few days later] we found him doubled up in his box quite stark and cold, with his head stretched out upon his knees as if asking relief. . . . And shall we ever see him, or recognize something that will seem identical with that gentle, intelligent eye of his, when this life is ended, and another, somewhere in other realms begun? I can name a dozen men whom I have encountered within ten days past, who are not half so worthy of living again, and of renewing old acquaintanceships, as this gentle, swift, engaging Andy.

Readers of *My Farm of Edgewood* will recall that in the book Mr. Mitchell speaks<sup>1</sup> of "a class of men who gravitate to the country by a pure necessity of their nature," who "linger by florists' doors, drawn and held by a magnetism they cannot explain, and which they make no effort to resist. . . . I think they are apt to be passionate lovers of only a few, and those the commonest flowers—flowers whose sweet home-names reach a key, at whose touch all their sympathies respond. They laugh at the florists' fondness for a well-rounded hollyhock, or a true petalled tulip, and admire as fondly the half-developed specimens, the careless growth of cast-away plants, or the accidental thrust of some misshapen bud or bulb." His friends scarcely need the further sentence, "I suspect I am to be ranked with these," to assure them that he is speaking of himself.

No tyranny of fashion ever dictated the choice of flowers at Edgewood, or determined the system of planting. Mr. Mitchell's own tastes—his whimsies, if you will—governed these matters. "I sometimes wander through the elegant gardens of my town friends," he wrote, "fairly dazzled by all the splendor and the orderly ranks of beauties; but nine times in ten—if I do not guard my tongue with a prudent reticence, and allow my admiration to ooze out only in exclamations—I mortify the gardener by admiring some timid flower, which nestles under cover of the flaunting dahlias or peonies, and which proves to be only some dainty weed, or an antiquated plant, which the florists no longer catalogue. Everybody knows how ridiculous it is to admire a picture by an unknown artist; and I must confess to feeling the fear of a kindred ridicule, whenever I stroll through the gardens of an accomplished amateur. But I console myself with thinking

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 332-333 ff.

that I have company in my mal-adroitness, and that there is a great crowd of people in the world, who admire spontaneously what seems to be beautiful, without waiting for the story of its beauty. If I were an adept, I should doubtless, like other adepts, reserve my admiration exclusively for floral perfection; but I thank God that my eye is not as yet so bounded. The blazing daffodils, blue-bells, English cowslips, and striped-grass, with which some painstaking woman in an up-country niche of home, spots her little door-yard in April, have won upon me before now to a tender recognition of the true mission of flowers, as no gorgeous parterre could do. With such heretical views, the reader will not be surprised if I have praises and a weakness for the commonest of flowers.”<sup>1</sup>

He counted it pure joy to search out the haunts of wild flowers. What he wrote of his brother Louis was equally true of himself. “He greeted every token of coming spring with glee; he delighted in watching the buds as they unfolded; over and over, I remember his loitering for hours in sunny May days under the near woods, exploring with his cane amongst the dead leaves for the anemones and the hepaticas. No gift was ever more acceptable to him than a handful of the first-blooming arbutus.”

It is in scattered and unexpected places that I like my children to ferret out the wild-flowers brought down from the woods—the frail columbine in its own cleft of rock—the wild-turnip, with its quaint green flower in some dark nook that is like its home in the forest—the maiden’s-hair thriving in the moist shadow of rocks; and among these transplanted wild ones of the flower-fold, I like to drop such modest citizens of the tame country as a tuft of violets, or a green phalanx of the bristling lilies of the valley.

<sup>1</sup> *My Farm of Edgewood*, 338–339. In the same volume read Mr. Mitchell’s account of his purchasing a field-daisy in Paris, pp. 138–139.

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Year by year, as we loiter among them, after the flowering season is over, we change their *habitat*, from a shade that has grown too dense, to some summer bay of the coppices; and with the next year of bloom, the little ones come in with marvelous reports of lilies, where lilies were never seen before—or of fragrant violets, all in flower, upon the farthest skirt of the hill-side. It is very absurd, of course; but I think I enjoy this more—and the rare intelligence which the little ones bring in with their flashing, eager eyes—than if the most gentlemanly gardener from Thorburn's were to show a dahlia with petals as regular as if they were notched by the file of a sawyer.<sup>1</sup>

The frailty, the gentleness, and the unassuming beauty of certain wild flowers brought his soul into communion and harmony with God, and thus satisfied some deep need of his spirit. He, at least, never hesitated to associate his religion and his love of flowers. "Re[becca] and I took our sermon and services in the woods," he wrote to Elizabeth, April 23d, 1888, "and brought home five or six full-blown blood-roots, four nearly opened buds of dog-tooth violets (yellow), and a stock of brilliant hepaticas of all tints (I never saw them more beautiful)." Again, on the 14th of May 1888, he reported to Elizabeth the result of another Sunday flower-hunt. "We picked (Hesse and I) yesterday, polygola for first time; also columbines in full bloom, oceans of large anemones, and bird's-foot violets in greater profusion than I ever found them."

His children tell me that in many cases personal associations determined his choice of flowers; that he loved especially those with which he became acquainted in boyhood and youth. "Take it away! Take it away!" he once cried out impatiently when a flower was brought to him. "I never

<sup>1</sup> *My Farm of Edgewood*, 341-342.

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knew it when I was a boy. It has no associations for me." And he waved it from him with a deprecatory motion of his hands. Miss Elizabeth Mitchell informs me that very often she was able to divert her father's mind from the deepest griefs by calling his attention to varieties of wild orchids which he had learned to love in his boyhood.

Very early in his life among them, the people of New Haven came to understand something of Mr. Mitchell's modesty, but only the members of his family knew how genuine was this quality of his nature, and in how many ways it manifested itself. He seemed to have absorbed something of the shyness and humility of his favorite wild flowers. He always shrank from putting himself forward, and never ceased to have a dread of public performance. His wife came to early knowledge of this characteristic during their voyage to Europe in 1853 when he refused to respond to a request for an after-dinner speech on board the *Arctic*. Subsequent experience convinced her that he could not be lionized, and both she and the children were often amused by the shifts to which he was driven to escape public notice. His family enjoyed the report of his experience during his voyage to Europe on the *City of Berlin* in May 1878. "The concert," he wrote to Mrs. Mitchell on May 11th, "is to come off to-night. They have been at me again to read something, to say something, to make some show. If none of them had known of my having written somewhat, I should have got off quietly and undisturbedly. It comes of writing Donald G., instead of Mr. Mitchell. Well, I shall get quit if I can, but I don't know how I shall be able to escape." A few hours later he continued: "Well, the concert came off, the salon jammed with 400 people, including sixty performers, and in the very middle of it, what does . . . the chairman [do but]

break out in a gas-y jumble about a distinguished author on board—well known—charming style—etc., etc., and ended up by calling me out by *both* names. . . . I was wedged in between an English lady and a German merchant, outside my usual place; but they spotted me, and I had to come out. I had a copy of Tennyson in my pocket, thinking if worst came I would get off by reading ‘Lady Clara Vere de Vere,’ and trying to fancy I was reading it to the children at home. So I began with apologizing for the impertinence of appearing at all in the midst of a concert, and ran on—better than I thought I could—complimenting the band, the ship, the captain, and finally Miss [Emma] Thursby [a well-known singer of that day], in a way that brought down the house. So I came off easily and without any reading at all.”

He was in Paris when he received the announcement that Yale had conferred upon him the LL.D. degree. On the 12th of July 1878 he wrote to his wife: “Two days ago came Lizzy’s announcement of the doctorate. ’T was a very foolish thing for the College to do (begging their pardon), and all I can say in extenuation is, that they have frequently done as bad things. Don’t you ever dare to write LL.D. in connection with my name! Huntington and I have had a good laugh over it; and as evidence of kindly feeling, and testimony to general sobriety of conduct, it is pleasant.”

He disliked to hear reference to his own books, shrinking from mention of them as though he were pained. He always placed copies of his own volumes upon inconspicuous shelves of the library to the left of the fireplace chimney where the light was so poor as almost entirely to conceal them from sight. A similar feeling made him shrink from interviews. He greeted a friend who once came to interview him with the remark: “Well, I am sorry to say I dread your call



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as much as I would that of a kindly disposed dentist." To a young woman who begged to see him that she might have the opportunity of "writing him up," he replied: "If you had asked permission to come into the Edgewood garden and pluck at your will the ripe raspberries (which are now luscious and abundant), I would have given you neighborly courtesy, and my heartiest permission. But—if you come with note-book and pencil to piece out a page of those personalities of which so many journals are now drearily full, I can give you only scantest welcome. I have commissioned my daughter to say as much to you; and I hope she will do it with as much peremptoriness, and with a much larger graciousness." It was almost impossible to lure such a man into public view. In 1895 he was asked to accept the presidency of the American Authors' Guild, and assured that his "only duties would be to preside when convenient, at eight monthly meetings." Of course he declined. On the back of the invitation appears the following note in Mr. Mitchell's hand: "Letter suggesting that I fill the place; but quite unsuited to my tastes and habits. Hard enough to *preside* at my own table!" In 1889 he wrote to Elizabeth: "I want an engagement beginning May 5th and ending May 12th, as far away from home as possible, to avoid an AΔΦ convention. Doesn't A[lfred] want to send a messenger boy (*æ.* 67) to Jacksonville, or Birmingham, or Kansas, or Brunswick, or Salem? 'Best of references!'"

Mr. Mitchell's shyness was combined with a rare humor which brightened his own life, and the lives of all with whom he came in contact. It counteracted his morbid tendencies and helped him to take a healthy view of life. At home he was not incapable of piquant criticism, which spared neither friend nor relative. Like Carlyle, he enjoyed the trenchant

wit of his own comments. Such criticism, however, indulged in half for amusement, was not intended for the public, and he would have been greatly pained to know that any of it had gone beyond the family circle. There was delightful repartee in the home conversation, and a keen relish of jokes at the expense of members of the household. He could even relish a good joke at his own expense.

Notwithstanding the fact that Mr. Mitchell professed great dislike of sitting for a photograph or a painting, his family suspected that he was not nearly so averse to portraiture as he seemed. They even ventured to believe that he was rather fond of securing good likenesses of himself, and they enjoyed the air of martyrdom with which he endured the sittings now and then required of him. His son-in-law, Mr. Edward L. Ryerson, half convinced that too good a likeness made Mr. Mitchell vain, arranged in 1901 with Gari Melchers to paint a portrait that would be emphatically representative of age. When the artist had finished, Mr. Mitchell turned to his son-in-law with the question: "Do you like it, Ned?" "Yes," was the mischievous reply, "I think it's very like you." "Well," Mr. Mitchell responded promptly, "I hope I shall live long enough to look like it." Upon an earlier (1899) portrait by G. A. Thompson, which Mr. Mitchell considered too faithful and realistic, he passed this caustic criticism: "I feel humiliated every time I look at that portrait of Thompson's. All the age, the stolidity, the cumbrous flesh-burden which beset an old man are honestly shown; but not one spark or trace of any wise and hopeful unrest; no smallest sign of any reach toward better things, or of any strain beyond fleshly cumbrances—in short, of the ideality which makes (or should make) every eager soul shine through its physical belongings, and give token of an inner

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brooding and redeeming spirituality. This is an excellent portrait—no way extenuated—of a weak old man, with hair uncombed, who is trying to cover the martyrdom of ‘sitting for his picture’ by spasms of content !”

Mr. Mitchell had a habit of brightening birthdays and holidays with touches of sly humor. At one time he would present a book from his library to a member of the family, and later on, the same book to the same person—a practice which occasioned considerable merriment. After a while he formed the habit of prefacing his presentations with the remark: “Here is a book for you, provided I haven’t given it to you before.” When he had no money for presents, he would now and then write such a form as this: “I O U ten birthday dollars.” Many times he would write some clever note to accompany his gifts. On the forty-fourth anniversary of their marriage, May 31st, 1897, he gave Mrs. Mitchell an envelope containing a gift of gold and the following verses:

For a horse, if you wish,  
Or a wedding dish,  
Or a Brockett<sup>1</sup> bill,  
Or whatever you will,  
To score up the day—  
On the last of May,  
“Forty-four year” ago,  
When we stood a-row  
In the old King Street room—  
The roses all a-bloom,  
And you in your wreath  
A-promising Parson Keith  
To love, honor, *obey*!  
(It’s what they all say !)

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Brockett was a carriage maker and repairer.

The reader will doubtless recall the hope which Mr. Mitchell voiced in his valedictory oration that education in America "should seek a higher dignity by a more intimate alliance with morality." That was the early expression of a hope born of a deep-seated healthfulness of mind and purity of spirit which came to him from his Puritan ancestry. Every one who came in contact with him recognized at once that essential purity which was one of his most pronounced characteristics. The whole influence of his life was on the side of moral goodness. He never wrote a sentence that he would have wished to blot out through fear of its harmful influence upon an impressionable mind. His children tell me that in his home he was scrupulously careful to avoid even the suggestion of evil. It was always his custom in reading aloud to omit any passages which were in any way questionable. They seemed to embarrass him. Sometimes he was moved to a kind of savage outburst of witty comment. I have in mind particularly his dislike of the nude in painting and sculpture. He especially disliked St. Gaudens's statue of Diana. "Artemis, Greek Diana, [is] usually [represented] in kirtle, sometimes flowing to the feet, othertimes tressed up for swift movement through woods; always, too, with her bow and quiver," runs one of his notes. "Except, indeed, that old Diana of Ephesus, with the three tiers of breasts, who presided over a different cult. This, however, is characterized by best Grecians as non-Hellenic; it was colonial, provincial. Again, the true Hellenic Diana is represented as of first purity. Æschylus, in *Agamemnon* 135, characterizes her as ἀγνὰ (chaste, pure); and Sophocles, *Electra* 1239, as αἰὲν ἀδμήταν (pure; that is, untouched, unsubmitted). Now, that such a goddess—who slew Acteon, huntsman, because he had seen her bathing—that such a goddess should,

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though bearing quiver and bow, have every rag of clothing stripped from her to brave the higher atmosphere of New York (consider, too, that the poor creature was put to the same gross exposure on the Agricultural Building in Chicago) is, as appears to me, unwarranted by scripture, or good taste, or a pitying decency!"

If any one thing more than another endeared Mr. Mitchell to the members of his family it was possibly his kindly and thoughtful unselfishness. He never spared himself to make those about him comfortable and happy. Many times he denied himself the use of money which he urgently needed in order to give aid or pleasure to wife or children. As time went on, he could not travel with pleasure while the family remained at home. "If I go, I shall leave New York about middle of May for Paris direct," he wrote to Huntington, March 11th, 1878, when the matter of commissionership to the Universal Exposition was under consideration. "I should love dearly to take one of my daughters with me, but it is impossible. The cramp upon us poor landholders is an awful one. I demur most about going because I must leave those behind who would enjoy it all, and improve by it, more than I, but nevertheless they all urge, and insist, and entreat that I should go."

Even when he was in Paris his mind was always reverting to Edgewood. The *City of Berlin* was scarcely started on her voyage when Mr. Mitchell was writing to his wife in this strain: "I puzzle myself from time to time with picturing the aspect of the garden, the hedge, the lawn, and the sight of you all wandering hither and thither about the place." These are the words of a man who had become unalterably attached to home; of one who had realized almost entirely his early dream:

## HOME LIFE

Your dreams of reputation, your swift determination, your impulsive pride, your deep-uttered vows to win a name, have all sobered into affection—have all blended into that glow of feeling which finds its centre and hope and joy in *Home*. . . . It is not the house—though that may have its charms; nor the fields carefully tilled, and streaked with your own footpaths; nor the trees—though their shadow be to you like that of a great rock in a weary land; nor yet is it the fireside, with its sweet blaze-play; nor the pictures which tell of loved ones; nor the cherished books; but more far than all these—it is the *Presence*. The *Lares* of your worship are there; the altar of your confidence is there; the end of your worldly faith is there; and adorning it all, and sending your blood in passionate flow, is the ecstasy of the conviction that *there* at least you are beloved; that there you are understood; that there your errors will meet ever with gentlest forgiveness; that there your troubles will be smiled away; that there you may unburden your soul, fearless of harsh, unsympathizing ears; and that there you may be entirely and joyfully—yourself.<sup>1</sup>

None could feel more keenly than Mr. Mitchell the inevitable changes wrought by time. To see home and the joys of home slipping from him brought sorrow too deep for utterance. He saw life clearly, and never tried to deceive himself by any cheap philosophy of optimism. "Death is always death; and the place where the dead lie, always Golgotha," was his feeling. "No great station in life, and no great troop of friends, can take away wholly the sting of bitter home griefs," he wrote to his daughter Susan, March 28th, 1904. And yet he refused to allow death to tyrannize over life. He knew the passing of three children: Hesse Alston 1st, in 1861; James Alfred in 1892; Pringle in 1900. Quietly and without bitterness he bore these afflictions. It

<sup>1</sup> *Reveries of a Bachelor*, 79-80.



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was his custom to have only a simple private funeral service, with the reading of a prayer and a hymn. At the service for James Alfred, Mr. Mitchell himself read the hymn, "O Mother Dear, Jerusalem," lingering with delight over the lines of these stanzas:

Thy gardens and thy gallant walks  
Continually are green,  
There grow such sweet and pleasant flowers  
As nowhere else are seen.

Quite through the streets, with silver sound,  
The flood of life doth flow;  
Upon whose banks on every side  
The wood of life doth grow.

In 1901 there came the crowning sorrow of his life—the death of Mrs. Mitchell. As he saw the inevitable approaching, he wrote these words:

Edgewood, December 5th, 1901.

I am sure that this (Thursday morning, 9 A. M.) is the last that my dear wife can look upon the sky and upon the faces of those she loves. A whole week she has been lingering—not suffering (as the good doctor assures us) but breathing scantily, taking no nourishment, yet with beautiful patience and serenity, waiting for the end in God's own time. Not wholly *here*, through all this week of lingering; but seeming already in a large measure translated to fields beyond, and only straggling and struggling back with a voice that made weak bubbles of faltering sound to try and cheer and comfort us; so used by her whole nature to giving cheer and comfort to others that she could not help nor can she help now yearning to continue these offices of comfort with her fainting voice and fainting power. God take her—and reward her—as I know *He* will.

## HOME LIFE

After her burial, instead of remaining indoors to brood over his sorrow, Mr. Mitchell took his usual walk over the snow-clad hills, and found comfort in those beauties of nature which spoke to him of God. On the 19th of July 1903, he wrote to his daughter Harriet the following note, after he had read the tribute which she had written to the memory of her mother: "I have been reading your touching 'leaves' of writing about your good and sainted mother, and have cried over them. . . . With a little more fullness of biographical detail perhaps you would be willing they should be copied in type so that some of your friends might share your love and admiration. Think of this; but remember, too, that the fondest and best deserved memories of what is lost may, by too much dwelling on them, grow morbid and so cheat life of its courage and vital everyday duties. Think what your good mother would have taught you this wise. With all her sweetness and loveliness of character, her admirable good sense and sound judgment were yet dominant." In these words we recognize the note of healthfulness and sanity which dominated the home life of Edgewood.

## XVIII

### FRIENDSHIPS

Now, there is no man more glad to meet friends, I am sure—nay, none who longs for their presence at times, more than I.  
—D. G. M. in random note.

Mr. Mitchell's friendships can be understood only in the light of his temperament. In the letters already given in this biography he has himself revealed the essential features of his nature. His reticence, his desire for solitude, his shrinking from publicity, all these qualities grew upon him with age—were fostered, indeed, by the retired life which he chose to live at Edgewood. There is a passage in an unpublished sketch of his brother Louis, in which Mr. Mitchell has described his own nature quite accurately. "Another noticeable thing in him, noticeable by strangers especially, was a certain infelicity of manner when strangers broke suddenly upon him. Like a plant grown in the shade, suddenly set into the scald of bright sunlight, there was a wilting, a poorly disguised eagerness to be rid of it all, and back in his quietude, and his corner. This shrinking habit of his, partly, I think, an inheritance . . . he never outgrew; nor tried or wished to outgrow; never could, if he had wished. It was as much part of him, and as ineradicable, as the drooping habit of a harebell." Most people who came to know Mr. Mitchell in more than a casual way were familiar with this side of his nature. Those in authority found it almost impossible to coax him away from Edgewood for a talk

to Yale students. Before going to Utica School in 1881 to read a few lectures he admonished Mrs. Piatt in this fashion: "Please, too, screen me from any dinings-out, or tea-fights. I am not up to it, and the readings alone exhaust all the nerve forces I can rally."

I find a note in which he refers to a characteristic which puzzled even himself. "It is strange, but it is true, for my own experience most sadly confirms it, that the very persons of all the world whom I would be most glad to meet, and most tremble for joy to meet, I have absolutely *avoided*, if I saw them on the other side of the street; I have turned out of the way to avoid. What this means, or what is its philosophy, I do not, and cannot tell." In all likelihood such action was the result of his inherent shyness. It was difficult for him to make approaches, to establish immediate ease of relationship. The mere act of doing so consumed his energy, and became a weariness of the flesh. For many years he met on the New Haven street-cars prominent residents of the city with whom he came to no more than a casual speaking acquaintance. He seemed to have a dread of making advances, though, as his children assure me, when he was once "cornered" no man could be more charming. Ordinarily, if one wished to know Mr. Mitchell, and to enjoy his friendship, one found it necessary to make the first advances. Those who did seek him out were not disappointed. I find this statement in one of his note-books: "Now, the real essence of all hospitality, whether bestowed or offered, is to impress one with the feeling that bestowment of the favor is altogether on the guest's part, and that it is to be asked, not as alms, but a tender and welcome charity—a kindness." Those who sought him came to experience in his home such essential hospitality.

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A few sentences which he once wrote on the subject of "Calling" confirm my belief that what some people thought to be an unsocial element in his nature was only a paralysis of action—a dread of initiative:

I believe a great many peaceable and injured men go out of the world with a weight of objugation and acrimony heaped upon them unjustly, simply by reason of their horror of "calling." I must confess that I write this in a spirit of self-exculpation. I know I have made a vast many enemies that I never intended to make, that I feared to make, simply from my horror of "calling." Now, there is no man more glad to meet friends, I am sure—nay, none who longs for their presence at times, more than I. But to "call," to march to a naked front door, in a naked street; to ring a bell, and hear its echoes alarming all the quiet below, or in some back kitchen; to feel that the servant is wrested from her nap, and cook in a feeze lest it be some visitor who is to lodge, and the master and mistress started upon their several fancies; to be ushered into a stately parlor; to give one's name; to seek out an easy chair in that dim ten minutes of waiting; to compress civilities into a ten minutes' conventionalism of talk; to tell the same joke you told yesterday; to make those everlasting allusions to the unusual coldness of the season, or to the fineness of the day; to say the spring is remarkably late this year; and then, when you have just warmed through the insipidities and platitudes of conventional talk, and were just warming to say something you really meant, or to talk of something you really cared about, to find the best way out of it by bidding good morning—it is terrible. The walking up to a man's door designedly, of malice aforethought to commit this breach of heartiness and truth is fearful. I like the accidental meetings—now with my neighbor whom I see hoeing potatoes in his field. I drop over the fence, give him good day, sit upon a rail, and have a long chat with him. We waste no time in empty conventionalisms.

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Along with all this reticence and love of solitude he had, as he said, a positive longing for human companionship. In fact, few men have been more dependent upon the good-will and the helpful encouragement—even the praise—of friends than was he. People recognized his sterling qualities, his entire sincerity, his hatred of sham; and valued his confidence accordingly. A kind of virtue went out from him, and influenced people in all walks of life. It was no uncommon thing for washwomen in New Haven to keep his picture hanging on their walls. Henry Mills Alden once forwarded to Edgewood a book which he inscribed to "Donald G. Mitchell, who could have taken the hand, and has touched the heart, of every eminent man of letters in America." And we are to remember that Mr. Mitchell numbered his friends by the hundreds. To form some notion of his genius for friendship, it is only needful to say that he was personally acquainted with Washington Irving, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Charles Dickens, George P. Marsh, Bayard Taylor, Henry James, Sr., George Bancroft, Henry W. Longfellow, Nathaniel P. Willis, Daniel C. Gilman, Paul Hamilton Hayne, Mary Mapes Dodge, Harriet Beecher Stowe, George William Curtis, and William Winter, all of whom admired and loved him. We are not surprised, however, to find that the really intimate friendships of a man endowed with such nature were few.

His most intimate friends were three: Mary Goddard, William Henry Huntington, and Dr. B. Fordyce Barker. His affection for Mrs. Goddard, the Mary with whom we have become closely acquainted in the previous chapters, is best commemorated in a letter written by him to Julia Piatt soon after her mother's death. It bears date of May 30th, 1886:



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I was sorry not to see more of you on that short stay in Norwich—and yet, not sorry. Talking, however well-meant, is always so idle when we are near to great griefs; and I am sure I can tell you better in a letter, how much I loved your mother, and how much she was to me during a long period of my life. In days you can't remember—you were so young—she was at once a sister and a mother to me, harming me very likely (as I see now) by care and indulgences which only a mother could show; making my life bright, and putting tender hopefulness in it when I was depressed and seemed doomed by deaths of those nearest, and death threatening me. Hence it is that I love that old house in Salem (which love you seem unable to understand) because your most affectionate and self-sacrificing mother made it a home to me, and never ceased doing things that made it more and more welcome to me; and doing them so well and cordially that in spite of all the depressions and isolation of it, I do still look back to those few years passed at Salem, when your mother reigned and beamed there, as among those which I look back to (and always shall) most yearningly. The earlier days in which she was among the best beloved of our Norwich household, don't warm my memory in the same way (perhaps because so young then) as those later ones when she took me into a home of her own, and abounded in those kindnesses which I could look for no where else. You must never laugh at my cherishment of Salem reminiscences. They are broader and deeper—by reason of your mother—than you can well understand.

After Mrs. Goddard's death, Mr. Mitchell cherished a similar affection for her daughter, and gave to it lasting enshrinement in the graceful dedication of the third volume of *English Lands, Letters, and Kings*.

B. Fordyce Barker was a native of Maine, born at Wilton, in 1819. After graduation from Bowdoin in 1837, he completed the course at Harvard Medical School in 1841, later studying in Edinburgh and Paris. His acquaintance with

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Mr. Mitchell began in Paris in 1844, and ripened into friendship after he began practising his profession in Norwich, Connecticut, in 1845. Barker was of a free and open nature. He was fond of society, and a lavish dispenser of hospitality. "His face and smile," wrote Mr. Mitchell, "made friendships wherever he went. Irving took to him at sight. His tact was marvelous; his intuition, wonderful; his observation, strangely acute." In short, he was just the kind of friend a shy, sensitive man needed. In 1856 Dr. Barker went to New York City, and rose to great prominence in his profession. Columbia University conferred the Doctorate of Laws upon him in 1877, Edinburgh in 1884, Bowdoin in 1887, and Glasgow in 1888. Mr. Mitchell rejoiced in every honor that came to Dr. Barker, as if it were his own. Twice he gave public recognition to their friendship by dedicating to the doctor *Fudge Doings* and *Seven Stories*. In 1878 it was Mr. Mitchell's good fortune to enjoy a period of European travel with Dr. Barker, when both had the privilege of spending a few days as the guests of Sir Spencer Wells, physician to Queen Victoria, at his beautiful country home near Hampstead. Dr. Barker was never so busy that he could not find time to go to Edgewood to render needed medical attention to his friend. Although they did not often have the opportunity of seeing each other, their friendship continued warm and intimate until the death of Dr. Barker in 1891.

We must remember that Mr. Mitchell was twenty-two years old when he met Barker. Theirs was, of necessity, a friendship of maturity; it was not founded upon common childhood memories. It was partly because of such foundation that the friendship existing between him and William Henry Huntington was the most intimate of his life—as it

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was the most intimate of Huntington's life. As we have seen, it began during earliest childhood when both were attending "dame school" in Norwich. In a letter written to Mrs. Mitchell, June 12th, 1879, Mr. Huntington referred to its genesis in this fashion:

Your letter of 29th May came in yesterday. I am indeed sorry to hear that your good husband has been suffering from acutely painful malady. I have not wittingly an enemy on earth, and wish no one ill, but there is hardly another whom I wish so well as Don Mitchell. Your good husband has been for long my very good friend; except an only surviving brother, there is no one living whom I have known so long. Our acquaintance began more than half a century ago at Miss Goodale's school, and ripened into intimacy over Webster's *Spelling Book*. It is odd how distinctly I recollect, when we had attained words of three syllables, his putting his finger on the word "catholic," in which he found specially amusing quality by virtue of the *cat* part of it. . . . Then we lost sight of each other. D. G. went away to Ellington, or some such foreign parts, and then to college, and we re-met only after his first return from Europe. It required little scraping to come to acquaintance again, and presently after his second return this grew to a friendship of more honor, profit, and prize to me than any other I rejoice in to-day. And this I have partly to thank you for, dear Mrs. Mitchell; at least have to thank you for not drawing it away, as young ladies sometimes do the bachelor friendships of their young lords. . . . I never forget how kindly you received me when you came to Paris, and when my way leads through Rue Luxembourg, I look up to the corner windows, and feel the better for it to this day.

About 1851 Huntington went to Paris, where he remained, except for occasional visits to America, living the life of a recluse bachelor. He became a collector of books

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and art treasures, his art collection eventually finding place in the Metropolitan Museum of New York City. Throughout their lives the two friends—so unlike in their domestic relationships—maintained delightful correspondence. Huntington had a happy humor, and a wholesome, hearty outlook upon life, which he always attempted to impart to his friend, especially when replying to a letter of melancholy tone.

After a visit to Edgewood in 1866, Huntington wrote, January 9th:

My two days with you and our gracious Lady of Edgewood, and the pretty children there, were foremost . . . in glad experience, and rest always high placed in my pleasantest memories. You were saying one of those agreeable nights, or one of those charming mornings, that you might have done better than in your writing line had you taken to the preaching profession. Ah, if you only knew, dear, happy man, how wisely and well you preached to me miserable from your wise, happy, fulfilled life as father of sweet children, and husband seven-fold blessed! . . . Thank the higher powers that you have been let be so fortunate and full-fruited with

love, and a space for delight,  
And beauty and length of days,  
And night, and sleep in the night;

when for every one of ninety-nine in a hundred it rests true that

He weaves, and is clothed with derision;  
Sows, and he shall not reap;  
His life is a watch or a vision  
Between a sleep and a sleep.

Sometimes he adopted a lighter tone, as in his letter of November 5th, 1878:

I do say that a man verging toward sixty who can cut and cut up a cord of wood a day (why Gladstone is only seventy or so, and he

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only cuts one tree at a time), and go home after that to satisfy his earned appetite at a table beset by a charming, loving household, and has good baccy to smoke (think what vegetable matter we have here for our pipes, and be thankful!) and a good wood-fire to smoke it at, and then goes picking a quarrel with this poor old world's goings-on, ought to be—*spanked*. D. G. M. do do all these things. Then D. G. M. ought to be spanked. Q. E. D. You are not near enough—how I wish you were!—for me to perform that stern but pleasing office. And I doubt if there be anyone in your immediate neighborhood of sufficient muscular vigor and authoritative age to undertake it.

In 1883 Mr. Mitchell determined to dedicate a new edition of *Dr. Johns* to his boyhood friend. "I don't know if you will approve," he wrote, November 28th, 1883, "but I have put your name on an initial page of the new edition of *Dr. Johns* (very much revised and somewhat cut down in preachments) as dedicatee. A cablegram, if you insist to the contrary, would very like come in time to stop the matter; but I hope you won't." Huntington had no desire "to stop the matter." On the 24th of March 1884, he wrote: "The fact of the dedication, and its form, are most grateful to me. The book I read again with more than the first interest. I don't think this is because of what you have cut from, or added to, the first edition—am sure it is not mainly because of that; but rather because of my being almost thirty years further removed from the scenes and their moral atmosphere, which you reproduce. To the truth of the drawing, time has lent the charm of perspective, and a softened harmony of color. And then I had just been reading *La Joie de Vivre*, after which *Dr. Johns* is like a bath and [a] clean shirt."

Huntington died in Paris, October 1st, 1885. More than a year later (November 5th, 1886), Mrs. Estelle E.

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Doremus wrote to Mr. Mitchell as follows: "After having closed the eyes of poor Huntington, I took a spray of flowers, the last thing his eyes had rested upon, and placed it in his hand until they took him away for burial. . . . His faithful nurse Angèle—she was an angel, indeed, to him—used to talk continually of his *dearest* friend, 'Monsieur Michel.' It was a long time before I found out that it was you she meant. 'He loved Monsieur Michel the best,' she would repeat. I thought you would like to know this, so I took a flower from his hand and pressed it, that it might go with the message."

When Dr. Barker died, in 1891, Mr. Mitchell realized that his intimate friends were indeed gone. To be sure there yet remained a few college-mates—Yarnall, Curwen, Emerson, Law—but with these it was impossible that he should ever enjoy such communion as that with Barker and Huntington. To Mr. Mitchell friendship was a matter of quality, not of quantity. It was enough for him to have known three such friends as Mary Goddard, Henry Huntington, and Fordyce Barker. And it is sufficient testimony to the richness of a man's nature, and to his capacity for friendship, to have won such warmth of affection from one strong-minded woman, and from two men of high intellect and distinguished attainment.



## XIX

### THE LONG TWILIGHT

I will hope for a sunset, when the day ends, glorious with crimson and gold.—*Reveries of a Bachelor*, 257.

But a crimson belt yet lingered over the horizon, though the stars were out.—*Reveries of a Bachelor*, 297.

After passing the age of seventy Mr. Mitchell kept more and more closely within the bounds of his Edgewood home. He had travelled; he had tasted adventure; he had known busy cities; he had experienced a great blaze of popular favor; and through a long succession of years had enjoyed the quiet of country life. With age came no regret for the course which he had followed; rather, a deepening conviction that in no other way could he so well have fulfilled his nature. Time had only made the calm of Edgewood increasingly satisfying to him, had ripened his genial philosophy of life, and brought him both contentment and wisdom. After a long period of strenuous endeavor, pressing financial problems had now been eliminated. At times he felt, of course, the oppressions of age, and that sense of loneliness and melancholy which comes to those who have outlived almost all of their own generation. He had once begun the somewhat saddening practice of checking in his Yale catalogues the names of his instructors and classmates, as each died. By the end of 1899 he had checked off the entire faculty of his college days, and all but 10 of the 104 freshmen of 1837. When he died he was survived by only 3 of his own class. The death of Mrs. Mitchell in 1901 left him

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solitary, and brought realization of the fact that for him memories constituted the most of life. And yet withal, in its own way, this was a peaceful, even a happy period. His faithful daughters ministered to his comfort. He enjoyed the affection of thousands of unseen friends who visited him by letter; and knew the homage of many whose pilgrimages centred at Edgewood. "I have much to be thankful for," he remarked to me in August 1903. "I have lived long, and suffer few of the infirmities of age. Time has dealt gently with me." Twilight had indeed come—a twilight long, beautiful, serene.

"The Edgewood farm experiences are near and yet somehow remote," he wrote in December 1897.<sup>1</sup> "The same old scenes are before me now, yet I have long foregone that close superintendence of farm-cropping to which I brought a young enthusiasm; and I see, full-face, negligences that are disturbing, and disorder which is past my power of mending. But nature wears always its old serenities. No less than at the beginning, keenest attention and loving care are given to those garden spaces immediately about me, where thirty years since I planted and watered my salads and brooded in the sunshine. In all this near territory I take the old delight, and find the fruits as sweet, the earth as kindly, the flowers as fragrant, and the sun as warm as when home began. The trees, too, are steadier and stancher friends; the shaded walks coiling away upon the hills, the purple distance, and the bright sheen of sea have the old charm. The autumn haunts of the woodland are still full of fire and gold; but the shadows the trees cast are longer, and so are the shadows of the years. But whatever the shadows may be, it is good to have a foothold upon Mother Earth, and to live face to face with nature,

<sup>1</sup>"The Season's Greeting," *Breeder's Gazette*, December 15th.

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where birds and brooks and breezes keep up their anthem, and all sounds invite 'peace and good will to men.'"

Until within a few months of his death, he continued to use the axe, cutting and splitting the wood with which he filled the shed for the glowing hearth-fires of early autumn and winter. While strength remained, he took long walks over the Woodbridge hills behind Edgewood. Sometimes he went beyond New Haven in the street-cars, and spent the afternoons wandering about the countryside. Again, with one of his daughters he would drive into the Salem region, and live over the days of his youth. He was pleased when, upon a suggestion from him, his brother Alfred purchased 1,200 acres of the ancestral domains and brought them (1900-1903) once more under Mitchell control. After walking became difficult for him he seldom passed a day without a leisurely drive. In the evening he turned to his books, or worked at map-making. Oftener still, as his eyesight grew more feeble, he listened while his daughters read. His habit of work persisted, and he ventured to project literary tasks that would have tried the strength of a younger, stronger man. I find that after the publication of the second volume of *American Lands and Letters* in 1899, he turned to the preparation of another, as is attested by a statement upon one of the sheets to the effect that the notes were for "a possible but not probable third volume." As late as 1907 he was hoping for strength sufficient to prepare for publication the manuscript of the fifth volume of *English Lands, Letters, and Kings*. With Bunyan's Feeblemind he could say: "This I have resolved on, to run when I can, to go when I cannot run, and to creep when I cannot go. As to the main I am fixed; my way is before me, my mind is beyond the river that has no bridge."

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He made an occasional visit to his daughter, Mrs. Edward L. Ryerson, of Chicago; but for the most part confined his travel to such distances as did not keep him from home overnight. Even New York City came to seem far off to him. "Thank you for your kind invitation," he wrote to Mr. Charles Scribner, December 15th, 1896; "but I have not been in New York for a night for four or five years; have not even passed through for three years, and feel very much as if I had lost all fellowship with cities."

By 1895 his family had all gone out from Edgewood save the daughters Elizabeth, Hesse, and Harriet. With a filial devotion rarely equalled, they cared for their distinguished father. He recognized the beauty of this devotion, and never tired of paying tribute to it. "Well," he wrote to Elizabeth in 1899, "the seventy-seventh year has ended! I wonder if another can come? These last years, with all the weaknesses, and the tottering steps, and the 'grass-hoppers' heaping up the 'burdens,' have not been the unpleasantest of life; for the kindnesses of those immediately about me have multiplied and made the 'down-hill road' seem like a goodly level, with welcoming lights shining on a home-hearth at the end of all the walks and drives I take."

In 1901 Mr. Mitchell made his last public appearance in connection with the two hundredth anniversary of the founding of Yale. "As an inheritor of some side-flow of Woodbridge blood," he was chosen to give the principal address at the dedication of Woodbridge Hall on the 23d of October. Not the least of the pleasure which he derived from this occasion resulted from his strong belief "that monumental memorials consecrated to every-day, high, human uses are far better worth than all the glitter of church-yards, and all the pomp of funeral obsequies." Notwithstanding his ad-

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vanced age, he was at his best on that day—his health good, his voice clear and melodious. In a delightful way he sketched the life of Timothy Woodbridge, for whom the building was named; and, as he closed, gave expression to his vision of Yale's future:

And so this great belt of Woodbridge influences which I have sketched in bold outline—cropping out in churches, in teeming villages, in mills that fire the October nights—this whole Woodbridge belt, I say, is to-day buckled by this jewel of a building about the loins of this stalwart University of Yale. Long may it last poised here midway between the groups of offices dedicated to science, and those others southward, dedicated to letters and the humanities! And whoso holds the reins in this comely administrative center should see to it that there is even working of these two great teams of progress—no nagging at one, while free rein is given to the other! Ah, what fine judgment belongs to driving well—whether on coaches, or in colleges, or in capitols!

There are oldish people astir—gone-by products of these mills of learning—who will watch anxiously lest harm be done to apostles of the old humanities. You may apotheosize the Faradays and Danas and the Edisons and Huxleys, and we will fling our caps in the air! But we shall ask that you spare us our Plato, our Homer, our Virgil, our Dante, and perhaps our “chattering” Aristotle and scoffing Carlyle. Truth—however and wherever won—without nervous expression to spread and plant it, is helpless; a bird without wings! And there are beliefs tenderly cherished—and I call the spires of nineteen centuries to witness—which do not rest on the lens or the scalpel!

I hope that the glow of a hundred other Octobers may mellow the tone of this marble hall, and that within times we laggards may hope to reach, a broad esplanade all unencumbered, and flanked with shading lindens if the elms fail us, shall sweep away southward, and by a rich, lofty, fretted portal cloven through

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the walls of Durfee, give rich and far perspective into the court of the great Academe beyond. And I see in my mind's eye, springing from this lofty portal, a new Rialto, stiff with sinews of steel, rich with emblems, spanning at one bound the surging tides of traffic that ebb and flow through Elm Street, binding the two great courts in one; and with wingèd figures in bronze upon the parapets, recording Yale's triumphs of the past, and heralding a thousand other triumphs to come.

During these quiet years there came to Mr. Mitchell frequent public recognition of the ideals for which he had labored. He was peculiarly gratified by that which came from the New England Association of Park Superintendents, when, at the annual meeting in New Haven, June 14th, 1904, the following minute was adopted:

Resolved, that we present to Mr. Donald G. Mitchell a loving cup as a token of our appreciation of his life-long interest in the promotion of a better out-door life, and as an expression of the love we bear him for the kindly words he has ever written and spoken, and our admiration of his work in laying the foundation of the city beautiful on which we have tried to build.

The next day Mr. Christopher Clarke, of Northampton, Massachusetts, on behalf of the association greeted Mr. Mitchell as "a pioneer master workman." "We gratefully acknowledge," continued Mr. Clarke in presenting the cup, "that you have laid the foundation for scientific and beautiful park building throughout this country."

Year by year the spell of the past grew upon him. "Wonderful," he wrote, "how the memory goes over, and repossesses, and re-populates the domain of early child-years, as the frailties of age press on one! Never, it seems to me, in all these seventy-one years which have drifted by me since



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I strode up and down with boyish eagerness in my father's garden, have I been able to recall the scenes, the beds, the clumps of bushes, the strawberry patches, the early apple trees and their respective positions, as to-day, when my gouty fingers half-rebel at the office of writing! I could, I am sure, make a better (because truer in detail) map of the garden—its beds, its surfaces, its boundaries, its every compartment, its arbors, to-day, than I could have done thirty years ago, when only forty years had elapsed. Why and how is this?"

The fascination of the past did not, however, stifle the alertness which characterized his old age. He delighted in keeping abreast of the times, in following the rapid advance of knowledge. The latest newspapers, magazines, and books were always at hand in the library. He knew the most recent developments in science, religion, and literature, and adjusted himself without difficulty to enlarging views of the universe. The pointed annotations which he was accustomed to make in his volumes have given me some notion of how thoroughly he read.

As the shadows lengthened, he fell to musing upon the deep things of the spirit, and felt an increased awe and reverence growing upon him. His religion became simpler and more vital; it had, in fact, long been growing so; he valued increasingly the realization of religion "in loveliness of perfect deeds," and became more and more impatient of mere words. "Sermons should not surely be long on Thanksgiving Day; but short, and crisp, and keen, and clear, and abounding in high incentive to all worthy work," he once wrote.<sup>1</sup> "Let us get over the idea, too, that hearty thanks-

<sup>1</sup>Under pen-name "Jno. Crowquill," in semi-weekly edition of the *Tribune*, New York, 1881.

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giving can only come out and declare itself in long prayer; or that any specialty of attitude or utterance will cover and exhaust its spirit. It finds voice in every man's day-long and week-long cheeriness, and in the equanimity and the courage with which he battles with the worst. Right manful and sturdy endeavor in all needful or humane work of any sort is in itself thanksgiving. A close grip on duty is as good as a 'saying of grace.' More and more the monasticism of mere holy utterance is giving place in wise men's minds to the holy helpfulness in all ways of charity and mercy that sublimates the tenor of a life." The last quarter-century of his life was but a growing into the ideals expressed in such a passage.

"What can be better," he asks in one of his random notes, "than implicit trust in the Power that placed us here, and that will reign wherever we go? What weariness of brain and heart in the wastes of theologic discussion as to what may be, or may not be! In regard to the personality of a Supreme Power, or about our own relation to that Power, what can we know save that the one is dominant, is immanent, and ceases not; and the other beyond all reach of thought save what is compassed in the words, 'Our Father'?" Many pages of such notes bear witness to the frequency of his religious meditations. I have deciphered several others worthy of preservation:

We are to believe in immortality because there is a sense of incompleteness about life, except it have some indefinite extension. We do many things which are misunderstood, though the act is well-intentioned. Except there be a future where such things are cleared up, where "justice" is declared, how incomplete and unbalanced life is! Every good deed, we think, must have its good

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outcome; but how, if there is no judgment passed upon it, no recognition of it, no ultimate decision of the point, whether it be good or bad? This would be miserable business! Not to know, never to be known, whether right *is* right, or wrong, wrong! What a hopeless, dreary, pointless muddle all this life and its aims would resolve itself into; as if, indeed, right living, right thinking, right actions, never had consequence; were never even more than so much chance drifting of impulse, of occasion, of "happenings" to you or me, that did not link into chains of intent, of dependence, stretching from far away, remote inheritances, and reaching to remotest, dimmest futurity, where justice and judgment shall be declared, and be accepted, and reign supremely!

What an awful change simple, absolute honesty would make in this life! And if anything is assured, by instruction and by best psychologic reckonings, about a life beyond this, it is the fact that an atmosphere of honesty is what all must breathe there—pinch as it may, and pinch whom it may!

What principle of segregation shall govern the sub-division of the great army of the sheep and of the goats? Who shall make for us those old-accredited divisions of the race, into the very good and the very bad? The line of demarcation will not be so sharp and so easily and clearly defined as some of our stolid orthodox preachers used to declare with brazen utterance. But whatever happens, 't is certain that what is light and bright and warming here, will be light and bright in regions beyond this; and what is dark and repellent and ugly and deceitful here, will wear the same disguises of shadow in another world. There is no alchemy in death that will change truth into untruth, or *vice versa*.

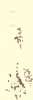
If I had a parish, I would lay out subjects for every Sunday in the year. I would not indulge in theological disputation, nor try to defend dogmas, nor even to preach morality; but I would try to grasp vital subjects, and so enwrap them with our hopes, and affec-

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tions, and ambitions, as to make them panoplies of faith, and constant urgents or determinants of good works. I would tell what I had come to know and feel of the fatherhood of God, of his determining presence with us, of his mystery, or of the mystery which enwraps all earnest thoughts of things supreme and enduring. I would discuss prayer, conscious and unconscious; and other forms of spiritual contact with Deity. I would try to show that it is needless and bootless to struggle for a conception of Deity determinate and fixed; that to attempt to arrive at such a conception is like putting the tape-measure with which we estimate cloth-widths, to a mountain, or the sky. Why, indeed, is such a conception important, or to be sought? Can words or thought ever carry us beyond the actuality, the fact-concept that *He is, and He reigns*? The greatest word-master can only put tints and colors into his exhibit of Divine quality; and what painter can approach the ineffable, inexpressible mystery and power and love of Him who reigns?

Now and then, even during sleep, such musings continued to occupy his mind. On one occasion when there drifted through his consciousness the beautiful words of Psalm 127:2, "He giveth his beloved sleep," there came to him the following lines which he wrote down upon awaking:

Is it morning we shall see  
When the night of flesh gives out,  
When life's battle ends in rout—  
Shall we call it morning, then?  
Morning such as mortal men  
Know not, and shall never know!  
Mortal eyes can never see  
Dawning of the "things to be."  
Shall death purge us of the dross  
That now films our eyes across?



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Meanwhile, his sense of humor did not desert him. The incongruities and the drolleries of life amused him as highly as in earlier days. He still delighted in wholesome fun and quick repartee. He even enjoyed reference to the grim realities of time. "I should think you would be interested in the living authors, not the dead ones," he remarked to a visitor. Among his notes, I find this passage: "Old Age! What a rum title for a book or a booklet in which to show how it creeps surely, swiftly, noiselessly—not threateningly, or with clatter, but with a tread like the interposed lap of mountains in a picture—scarce showing fissures or joinings; its big, dominating swells hiding small intervals, but piling, lifting, and taking ice in their gulches!"

Time and strength sufficed for the completion of one more task. Late in 1906 the Scribners planned to have Mr. Mitchell supervise a final issue of his writings, a work to which the veteran author looked forward with satisfaction and pleasure. His old modesties, however, clung to him to the last. Remonstrating against the plan of his publishers to use the expression, "The Works of Donald G. Mitchell," he wrote (July 18th, 1907): "Unless there be good reason to the contrary, couldn't 'The Works' be dropped? 'The Works' seems to me a little pompous and pretentious."

For more than a year the fifteen volumes of this Edge-wood edition were in process of making. The task had to be accommodated to Mr. Mitchell's pace. "Pray excuse me if I work very slowly," he wrote to his publishers, November 1st, 1906. "Age has a hard grip upon me, under which mole-hills turn to mountains. . . . I half doubt (especially after morning hours are gone) if the work is worth doing at all! Some sort of preface for the series (to go in *Fresh Gleanings*) I *will* write before many days." Months passed,

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the preface remained unwritten, and the publishers were in despair. In reply to a personal appeal from Mr. Charles Scribner, Mr. Mitchell wrote the following letter, almost the last with reference to literary matters which came from his pen:

Edgewood, 4th August 1907.

Dear Mr. Scribner,

Your kind letter of recent date came duly. I have tried hard to put my mind to the little task you propose; but still, as many times before, my mind is laggard, and won't find fit words for the occasion. I know you've reason to be annoyed, but you haven't made proper allowance for the burden of years. My daughters try to *put me up* to the work, and say all manner of kind and provocative things; but—the needed words *stay*. I will try again next week, and should you fail to receive somewhat by Thursday or Friday, put me down as incorrigible and preface-less.

Very truly yours,

Don<sup>d</sup> G. Mitchell.

Try again he did, and the copy for the preface went forward to New York City on August 10th. We should all be sorry to have been deprived of that delightful farewell. I am inclined to think that every one who reads those seven pages of prefatory matter will agree that “the shaky and uncertain forces which beleaguer a man well steeped in the ‘eighties,’” in no way obscured the charm and the grace of Mr. Mitchell's style.

The publishers had undertaken the Edgewood edition none too soon. Had the work been delayed another twelve-month, it could not have received the personal attention of the author. Providence, however, had been kind. There had been no shortening of the twilight. Time and strength sufficient unto the task had been allotted; and even yet for



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Mr. Mitchell a season of quiet rest and contemplation remained. There were, though, no more ambitious hopes, no more sturdy plans. Life's work had rounded into the evening that shortens labor.

## XX

### THE END

And as he looks forward . . . there is something in the thought of lying at last under the trees that grow old and die, and spring again, and beside the brooks that murmur softly, as they did when he was young, and as they will do when his body is dust, which reconciles him even to the grave; and which carries his hope from the trees and the brooks up to that Power whose wisdom and strength they adorn, and whose mercy and goodness they show forth continually.—*The Lorgnette*, 2.174.

During the first seven months of 1908, Mr. Mitchell enjoyed the quiet routine of Edgewood. His zest for the out-of-doors was as keen as ever, and, if strength at all permitted, no day passed without its walk or drive. But "the feebleness and half-invalidism" which he characterized as "the normal rest of the eighties," were perceptibly growing upon him. He tired more quickly; he rested more frequently on his library couch. And yet through all he continued to enjoy life. One bit of recognition came just not too late. On the 10th of August the Edgewood Civic Association made him its first honorary member; "for giving us the name of Edgewood, and recording in permanent literature the attractive features of this part of New Haven; for his pioneer efforts to promote architectural and landscape beauty upon private places and in public parks; and for his delightful agricultural and literary essays," are the words which conveyed the reason for the action.

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August was nearing its meridian when the change came. On the morning of the 13th, Mr. Mitchell, in cheerful mood, had taken a drive over the familiar hills in company with one of his daughters. After dining he had, as was his custom, gone into the library to rest. The stroke came swiftly. Within an hour after he had lain down, there came a hemorrhage—the opening of some old wound in the lung, so the physicians thought—and he recognized that death could not be far off.

The beauty and the serenity of twilight now deepened into shadow. Long before, in *Dream Life*, the young author had looked forward to the end. “Hoary age, crowned with honor and with years, bears no immunity from suffering. This is the common heritage of us all; if it come not in the spring, or in the summer of our day, it will surely find us in the autumn, or amid the frosts of winter.” And so it was that in the winter of his life the storms came upon him. The sudden attack of illness resulted in a clouding of his mind. A long life of unusual mental activity had worn out the delicate mechanism of the brain, although the strong vital flame yet burned within the body. For months the man who had taught the world to love him, wandered in a dreamy maze, brightened now and then by flashes of the old and charming manner. Most of the time he did not recognize those about him. Again, he seemed half conscious of his surroundings. Sometimes, as he stood at the library window and gazed out over lawn and hedge, he spoke softly to himself: “I used to know this place, and it was beautiful. Yes, I believe I planted those trees and flowers.”

He was cared for with an affection and a tenderness taught by the example of his own life. With loved ones around him he died about nine o'clock in the evening, De-

## THE END

cember 15th, 1908, in the library which for those many years had been his retreat "from paine and wearisome turmoyle." The blaze of a wood-fire on the open hearth illuminated the calm face and the snowy hair of the Master of Edgewood as he lay in the quiet of death.

In accordance with his own wish the funeral was entirely private. The peaceful atmosphere of home encircled him to the last, and he was borne from Edgewood by the kindly hands of sons and grandsons. On the 17th of December, he was buried in the Woodbridge cemetery in a lot chosen by himself and planted by his own hands with tree and vine and hedge. A simple stone marks his grave—the granite bearing words in lettering of his own design:

DONALD G. MITCHELL

1822-1908.

There, overlooking the beautiful Woodbridge hills, which he loved with undying affection, he lies beside his wife and his sons Pringle and James Alfred.



## APPENDIX





## BIBLIOGRAPHY

In the following chronological list of Mr. Mitchell's writings the names of all books or pamphlets are set in *italics*. Contributions to newspapers and magazines are in Roman type. The list is complete so far as books and pamphlets are concerned. It is incomplete otherwise, but it is believed that all really important items are given.

For the first three years all the contributions except the last entry under 1841 appeared in the *Yale Literary Magazine*.

### 1839

The Heir of Lichsteinstein. A Sketch. (August), 445-463.  
Sketches of Real Life, or Scraps from a Doctor's Diary.

No. 1. The Victim of Fear. (December), 566-78.

### 1840

Sketches of Real Life, or Scraps from a Doctor's Diary.

No. 2. Unsuccessful Love. (January), 139-148.

No. 3. Unsuccessful Love. (February), 191-202.

James Fenimore Cooper. (March), 249-259.

To our Readers. (June), 353-355.

Bulwer. (June), 356-365.

Thoughts upon Novel Reading. (July), 438-444.

Epilegomena. (July), 445-448.

More Scraps from my Diary.

A Night in the Hospital. (August), 487-491.

A Chapter in a Life. (August), 492-495.

Sir Walter Scott. (November), 61-10.

Fragment. Verse. (November), 25.

Epilegomena. (November), 42-44.

The Mirror, or Tablets of an Idle Man.

Part i. (November), 26-34.

Part ii. (December), 65-73.

### 1841

The Mirror, or Tablets of an Idle Man.

Part iii. (January), 100-109.

Part iv. (February), 160-169.

Part v. (May), 261-272.

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 Agricultural Society, 125-130.

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- Landscape Gardening and Rural Architecture. *New Englander* (April),  
 1.203-215.

1844

- The Fashionable Monthlies. *New Englander* (January), 2.96-105.  
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1845

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 Correspondence. *Cultivator*.

(February), 2.53-54.  
 (March), 98-99.  
 (April), 120-121.  
 (May), 138-139.  
 (June), 172-173.  
 (July), 201-202.  
 (August), 236-237.  
 (September), 268-269.  
 (October), 300-301.  
 (November), 330-331.

- Correspondence. *New York Commercial Advertiser*. Letters from the places  
 indicated appear in the issues of this newspaper as dated. These letters,  
 with the exception of the third, are signed "Don."

From London, April 17.  
 From Windsor, April 24.  
 From Liverpool, May 14.  
 From Dublin, May 20.  
 From Dove Valley, Derbyshire, May 30.  
 From London, June 2.  
 From Sheffield, July 28.

1846

- Correspondence. *Cultivator* (February), 3.50.  
 Notes by the Road. *American Review*, as under:  
 No. i. Of What it Costs, and How it Costs. (February), 4.145-158.  
 No. ii. How One Lives in Paris. (October), 377-388.  
 No. iii. A Glimpse of the Apennines. (November), 449-458.  
 No. iv. From the Elbe to the Zuyder Zee. (December), 588-599.  
 Letter from Washington. *Morning Courier and New York Enquirer*, Decem-  
 ber 17. (Later this was classed as one of the "Capitol Sketches"; but the

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numbering began with iii. This letter was the first of Mr. Mitchell's writings to bear the signature "Ik Marvel.")

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No. iv. December 31.

1847

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No. vi. January 12.

No. vii. January 16.

No. viii. January 23.

No. ix. February 3.

No. x. February 10.

No. xi. February 26.

No. xii. April 17.

No. xiii. April 28.

The Marvel Letters—New Series. *Morning Courier and New York Enquirer*.

Fourteen letters published as under:

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From Sharon Pavilion, August 25.

From Sharon, September 1.

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From Trenton Falls, September 11.

From Avon Springs, New York, September 29.

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No. ii. Rome and its Environs. (February), 46.

No. iii. The Campagna about Rome. (April), 107.

No. iv. Italian Agriculture. (May), 139.

No. v. Tuscan Agriculture. (June), 188.

No. vi. Lombardy. (July), 222.

No. vii. French Farming. (September), 269.

No. viii. A French Village. (October), 306.

No. ix. Wines and Vineyards of France. (November), 337.

No. x. Wines of France. (December), 371.

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No. v. The Illyrian Cavern. *American Review* (January), 5.17-25.

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 Thirty letters form this series. They were printed first in the daily, later in the weekly and the semiweekly, editions. The numbering of the letters as published is not accurate. In the list below, the number originally printed before each letter is given without correction. The date following the title of each letter is that of the issue of the daily edition in which it appears.
- No. i. From London. No subtitle. June 29.
- No. ii. London. The Chartists. July 3.
- No. iii. Paris. Character and Evidences of the Change in France. July 11.
- Unnumbered. Paris. The Four Days of June. July 14.
- No. v. Paris. After the Insurrection. July 14.
- Unnumbered. Paris. Causes and Abettors of the Revolt of June. July 27.
- No. vii. Paris. A Street View. July 31.
- Unnumbered. Paris. No subtitle, but dated July 13th and 18th, 1848. July 31.
- No. ix. Paris. The French not Fit for a Republic. August 5.
- No. viii. Paris. *Faits Divers*. August 8.
- No. x. Paris. No subtitle. August 18.
- No. xi. Paris. No subtitle. August 22.
- No. xii. Paris. The Elements of Discord: the Italian Question. August 29.
- No. xiii. Paris. No subtitle. September 12.
- No. xiv. Paris. The Italian Question. September 13.
- No. xv. Paris. The Constitution and the Siege. September 27.
- No. xvi. Paris. The Approaching Elections. October 3.
- No. xvii. Paris. The Elections. October 7.
- No. xviii. Paris. The Election. October 12.
- No. xiv. Paris. Another Street View. October 18.
- No. xix. Paris. Threatenings. October 20.
- No. xx. Paris. A Storm in the Assembly. October 21.
- No. xxi. Paris. A Glance at the Assembly. October 27.
- No. xxii. Paris. Pictures from the Provinces. December 5.
- No. xxiii. Paris. Fête of Constitution. December 13.
- Unnumbered. Paris. Glimpse at the French Chamber. December 29.
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- A Ride in the Rain. By Ik Marvel. *Ibid.* (April), 14.209-211.

1849

- The Marvel Letters from Abroad. *Morning Courier and New York Enquirer*.
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- No. xxviii. Paris. Talk of the Day. January 12.
- No. xxix. Paris. The Change. January 19.
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- Ik Marvel at Home. A letter from Newport, Rhode Island, dated September 4th, 1849. *Morning Courier and New York Enquirer*, September 12.
- A Bachelor's Reverie. By Ik Marvel. (The three parts, Smoke—Blaze—Ashes.) *Southern Literary Messenger* (September), 15.601-609.
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1850

- The Battle Summer*. New York. Baker & Scribner. This book is not made up of the letters contributed to the *Courier and Enquirer*, but of material relating to an earlier period than that covered by those letters. The book went on the market December 21st, 1849, but bore date of 1850 on title-page.
- A Bachelor's Reverie. Over Sea-coal and Anthracite. By Ik Marvel. *Southern Literary Messenger* (March), 16.162-171.
- A Bachelor's Reverie. Reprint from the *Southern Literary Messenger* of September 1849, in large octavo, 40 pages. Privately printed by George Wymberley Jones, at Wormsloe, near Savannah, Georgia. Twelve copies only were issued. Colophon in Old English.
- The Lorgnette*. A series of yellow-covered pamphlets. The numbers of the first series are dated January 20, 30, February 7, 14, 21, 28, March 7, 14, 28, April 4, 11, and 24, respectively. Those of the second series, May 10, 25, June 10, 24, July 8, 20, August 4, 18, 31, September 11, 25, and October 9, respectively. Henry Kernot was ostensibly the publisher to the end of the first series. The second series bore the imprint of Stringer & Townsend, New York. Within the year the two series were issued in book form, two volumes, by Stringer & Townsend. The illustrations were by F. O. C. Darley; tail-pieces by Donald G. Mitchell.
- The Roman Girl. By Ik Marvel. *Southern Literary Messenger* (December), 16.717-719.
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 (October), 3.707-709.  
 (November), 8.49-851.  
 (December), 4.131-133.
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(May), 843-847.  
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1853

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(January), 6.269-275.  
(February), 419-422.  
(March), 558-562.  
(April), 703-706.  
(May), 847-850.  
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(July), 272-273.  
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(May), 426-433.  
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(September), 227-234.  
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Address at Twenty-fifth Anniversary of Alpha Delta Phi, June 25th, 1857. Printed in *Alpha Delta Phi*, 14-37.

1859

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Wet Weather Work. *Atlantic Monthly*.

(April), 11.444-454.

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(November), 617-625.

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A New Preface to *Dream Life*. September.

1864

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Lackland's House Plans. *Ibid.*, May.

Lackland's Gardener. *Ibid.*, July.

A Pig and a Cow. *Ibid.*, August.

On Gateways. *Ibid.*, September.

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Village and Country Roadside. *Ibid.*, November.

Doctor Johns. *Atlantic Monthly*.

(February), 15.141-151.

(March), 296-308.

(April), 449-467.

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(June), 681-692.

(July), 16.66-77.

(August), 211-221.

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No. 2. English and American Wayside. (July), 197-205.

No. 3. Mr. Urban and Fifty Acres. (August), 347-354.

No. 4. Fifty Acres Again: A Commission of Inquiry. (September), 447-454.

No. 5. A Country House. (November), 4.1-7.

*Doctor Johns*. New York. Charles Scribner and Company. In two volumes. Reprinted from the *Atlantic*.

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No. 7. Village Greens and Railway Gardens. (March), 429-436.

No. 8. Parks, Gardens, and Graves. (April), 538-544.

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*Rural Studies*. New York. Charles Scribner & Co. The *Horticulturist* and the *Hours at Home* papers in book form.

1868

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Winter Talk, 15-17.

Spring Talk, 31-33.

Summer Talk, 35-37.

Autumn Talk, 53-57.

Our Heading and Our Hopes. This unsigned article is Mr. Mitchell's initial editorial in the first number of *Hearth and Home*, December 26.

1869

*Pictures of Edgewood*. New York. Charles Scribner and Company.

*Hearth and Home*. Mr. Mitchell's chief contribution to this journal, apart from his regular editorial work, was a series of papers entitled "Wilkerson's Journal," the diary and observations of one "Abijah Wilkerson." In a note Mr. Mitchell says: "I thought seriously of extending and publishing [the "Journal"] in book form. I still regard it (1902) as one of the best things I ever did." The instalments of "Wilkerson's Journal" appeared as follows:

January 23.

February 6, 13, 27.

March 6, 13, 20, 27.

April 3, 10, 24.

May 1, 8, 15, 22, 29.

June 5, 12, 19.

July 3, 10, 17, 24, 31.

August 7, 14, 21, 28.

September 4, 11, 18, 25.

October 9, 16, 23, 30.

November 6, 13, 20, 27.

December 11, 18, 25.

The articles marked \* constitute a gleanings from unsigned editorial matter which was doubtless written by Mr. Mitchell:

\* A Farmer's House, January 2.

\* A New Year's Talk.

\* Valentine Day, February 13.

\* A Library Window, February 20.

\* Something About School-Books.

\* Of School-Rooms, February 27.

\* Mammon Overrides Charity, March 6.

\* Our Advisers, March 13.

\* Forbidden Topics Which Interest Everybody, March 27.

\* Another Library Window, May 1.

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- \* Mr. Raymond, July 3.
- \* Octave Feuillet, July 10.
- \* Amused With Cost, July 17.
- \* New Englandism and Oldtown Folks, July 24.
- \* John Stuart Mill, August 14.
- \* At the Springs: Saratoga, August 28.
- \* Something Besides Gold, October 9.
- \* Autumn Search for Homes, November 6.
- \* What Does Social Science Mean? November 13.
- \* Mr. Greeley as Woodsman, November 20.
- \* George Peabody.
- \* A Thanksgiving, November 27.
- \* A Year's End, December 18.
- \* A Flavor of Christmas, December 25.

Articles in *Atlantic Almanac*. This year Mr. Mitchell alone edited the *Almanac*.

- Fireside, 3-7.
- Roadside, 16-20.
- Brookside, 25-28.
- Side by Side, 37-40.

### 1870

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- February 19, 26.
- March 5, 12, 19, 26.
- April 2, 9, 16, 23, 30.
- May 21, 28.
- June 11, 18.
- July 9, 16, 23, 30.
- August 6, 20, 27.
- September 10, 17, 24.

- \* Anno Domini, January 1.
- \* Edwin M. Stanton, January 8.
- \* Dictionaries.
- \* Queen Victoria.
- \* Town and Country Roads, March 12.
- \* A Plea for Flowers, April 2.
- \* Road-side Trees, April 23.
- \* Thomas Carlyle, May 28.
- \* Death of Mr. Dickens, June 25.
- \* Reminiscences of Mr. Dickens, July 2.
- \* The Fourth, July 9.
- \* A Word About Athletic Sports, July 16.
- \* The War, August 27.
- \* France, September 24.
- \* Thomas Hughes.

Charles Dickens. *Hours at Home* (August), 11, 363-368.

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1871

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1873

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How a Tinker Wrote a Novel. *Ibid.*, December.

1874

Christmas Angels. *St. Nicholas*, January.  
About Some Queer Little People. *Ibid.*, March.  
Who Printed the First Bible? *Ibid.*, April.  
Nice Old Gentleman. *Ibid.*, June.  
Fifty Pounds Reward! *Ibid.*, September.

1875

Dark Bit of History. *St. Nicholas*, November.

1876

Fences and Division of Farm Land. An address before the Connecticut Board of Agriculture, West Winsted, Connecticut, December 16th, 1875. Ninth Annual Report of the Secretary of the Connecticut Board of Agriculture, 171-186. Hartford, 1876.

1877

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*About Old Story-Tellers*. New York. Scribner, Armstrong & Co.

The frontispiece is from a photograph of Mr. Mitchell's son, James Alfred Mitchell.

A Series of Agricultural Articles. Semi-Weekly edition New York *Tribune*, August to October. A few titles of articles as under:

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The Potato Beetle's Progress.

Government Supervision.

Not Wholly Unconnected with Beans.

Asking Advice.

About Advice Once More.

The Colorado Beetle in England.

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"Mons. Tonson Come Again!"  
"Be Steady"—Some Thoughts of an Old-Fashioned Virtue.

1881

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A Townsman's Inclinations.  
Premiums for Poles.  
Our Farm Thanksgiving.  
Christmas in the Country.  
Our Country Roads.

1882

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On the Threshold. (February 15), 1.5.  
A Lobby. (February 22), 21.  
Halls. (March 1), 37.  
An Early Breakfast. (March 15), 69.  
Round About the Room. (March 22), 85.  
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Over the Mantel. (April 5), 117.  
In the Library. (April 12), 132.  
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A Library Corner. (May 3), 185.  
A Rolling Screen. (May 17), 217.

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L. S. Punderson, Printer and Lithographer.

1883

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A New Preface to *Reveries of a Bachelor.* August.

A New Preface to *Dream Life.* September.

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1884

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1889

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1890

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1891

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1892

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1894

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1895

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1897

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1899

*American Lands and Letters.* Leather Stocking to Poe's Raven. New York. Charles Scribner's Sons.

1902

Woodbridge Hall Dedicatory Address. Given October 23d, 1901. Published in the Volume Commemorating the Two Hundredth Anniversary of the Founding of Yale University. New Haven. 1902.

1907

Prefatory. The Edgewood Edition of The Works of Donald G. Mitchell. New York. Charles Scribner's Sons.

## PORTRAITS OF MR. MITCHELL

Portraits of Mr. Mitchell were painted as follows:

1. By Charles Loring Elliott, 1851. Owned by Donald G. Mitchell, New London, Conn.
2. By Charles Noel Flagg, 1861. Owned by Mrs. Rebecca Mitchell Hart, New Haven, Conn.
3. By G. Albert Thompson, 1899. Owned by Mrs. Susan Mitchell Hoppin. It hangs in the Donald G. Mitchell Memorial Library, New Haven.
4. By Gari Melchers, 1901. Owned by Mrs. Mary Mitchell Ryerson, Chicago.
5. By Katherine Abbot Cox, 1904. Owned by Mrs. Susan Mitchell Hoppin, New Haven, Conn.
6. By John Ferguson Weir, 1907. Purchased by the Class of 1879, Yale College, and presented to Yale University. It hangs in the Dining Hall.
7. By Eleanor Winslow, 1918. Copy of the Cox portrait. Owned by the Mitchell sisters. It hangs in the Edgewood library.



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